暗黒神話

諸星大二郎

JUMP SUPER ACE

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COVER DESIGN
川島僖三(水野プロ)

Dark Myth

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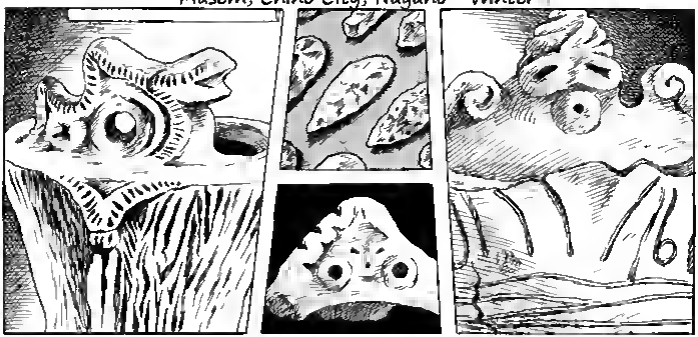
The Chapter of The Beast

Mount Tateshina,
Nagano Prefecture
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
rustle rustle rustle rustle
アーン
アア…
アー!
Waa Waa Waa
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
rustle rustle rustle
アー!
アー…
Waa Waa Waa

Dark Myth

Ten Years Later, Togariishi Archeological Musem, Chino City, Nagano Winter



Eh..
It seems you're interested in the Jomon Culture.
Haha.. It's just that I've seen you around here a number of times. Are you from Tokyo?
Uhuh.. Musashino.
The name's Takeuchi and I call myself a historian. I guess you come frequently to Suwa?
It.. It's like somehow I feel an urge.. like something is drawing me here. It's that piece of Jomon pottery...
Hmm.. Me too. Have a look at it.
It has a snake pattern attached. And there are many legends about snakes from this region..

Located in the heart of the Suwa Basin, this Togarishi site was the location of a fairly large settlement since about 5-6000 BCE, starting during the Jomon Period

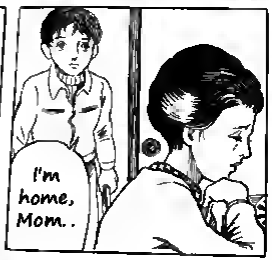
It is said their descendants bore crests showing scales on their bodies...
Apparently the inhabitants worshipped snakes in particular as gods
I see... Sorry for making you listen to my dull speech..
No. I'm fine. Just a little dizzy..
Wh- what's wrong? Aren't you feeling well!?
Snakes... Crests...
Express
Eh... My name...?
I thought you might find it useful as a reference. See you later, Takeshi..

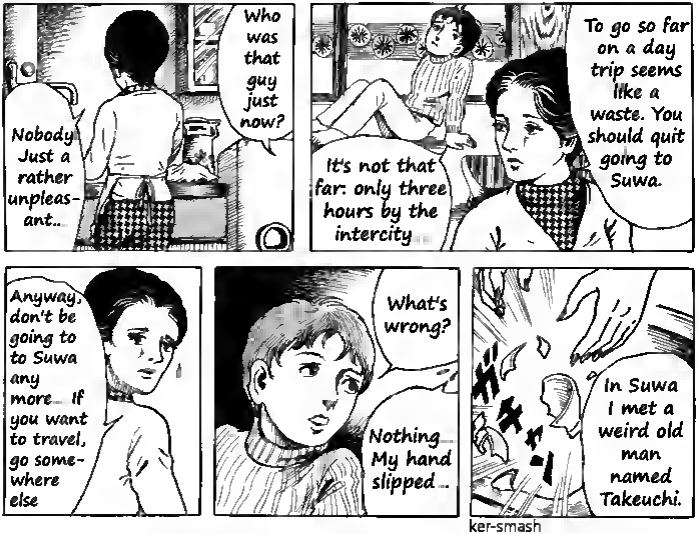
Express
Did you see? Did you see?
2
Express
Tokyo
Musashino

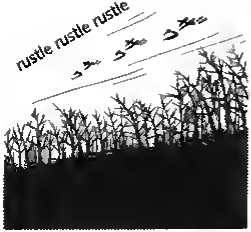
I'm ho
Leave at once!

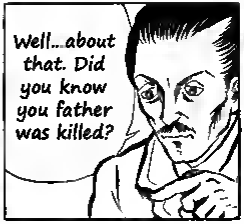
That's too bad, ma'am. Well then, another day..

Oh let your baby take a trip. More important, I'm starving
My, it's so late. Do you know what time it is?


I'm home, Mom..


Who was that guy just now?
Nobody. Just a rather unpleasant...
To go so far on a day trip seems like a waste. You should quit going to Suwa.
It's not that far: only three hours by the intercity
Anyway, don't be going to to Suwa any more... If you want to travel, go somewhere else
What's wrong?
Nothing... My hand slipped...
In Suwa I met a weird old man named Takeuchi.
ker-smash
Eh...? Oh! You're that guy...
Excuse me. You're Takeshi, right?
My father? He died when I was just a kid. Ten years ago or so...
My name is Kotaro Koizumi. I'm a friend of your father from way back...


rustle rustle rustle


Well...about that. Did you know you father was killed?

The murdered body was discovered but the case was never solved...
So no one told you. It was in a forest on Mt. Tateshina...

Umm, okay... but...
Why don't the two of us go check around there. As a friend, I just can't stand by

Well, at that time I wasn't sure myself..
But... why are you telling me about that now..
But lately by chance I came into some information... What do you think...

I feel certain we can find a clue in your father's effects..
You see, your father was doing some research in Suwa...

And I recommend not mentioning it to your mother. It might open old wounds...

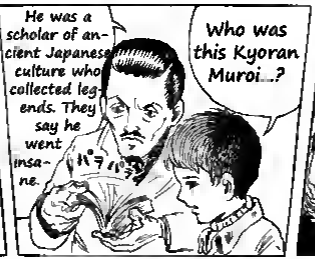
Blood was coming out of my shoulder as well.
Blood was flowing from his back. So that was Father..
ザザザ
Now that he mentioned it, I have this vague memory... crying standing in front of man that had fallen.
There was someone nearby. I think there was definitely someone else there...
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
scar that looks like a snake's head... maybe it's from that time.
I always thought it was maybe from a bicycle accident.
And that reminds me that since I was a kid I've had a scar on my shoulder.
This ...

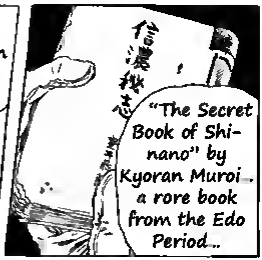
Well..
Sorry to keep you waiting. So? Did you find any kind of clue in your father's effects?

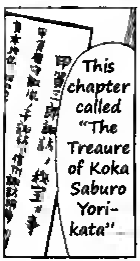
When winter break came, Takeshi visited Suwa again.
駅前 ショッピングセンター

The only thing you could call "effects" is this old book...
Let's see ..

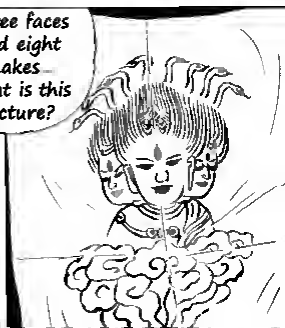
パラッ
There's a slip of paper inserted here

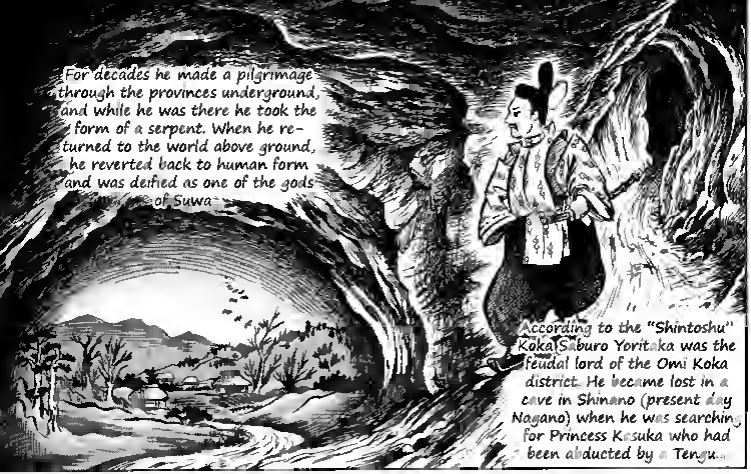

He was a scholar of ancient Japanese culture who collected legends. They say he went insane.
Who was this Kyoran Muroi...?

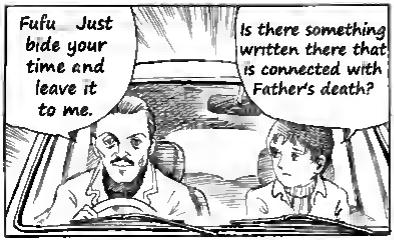

"The Secret Book of Shinano" by Kyoran Muroi... a rore book from the Edo Period...


This chapter called "The Treaure of Koka Saburo Yorikata"

That may just be something he was using as a bookmark without any special meaning. The issue is this page.


Three faces and eight snakes... what is this picture?

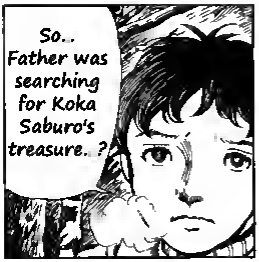

For decades he made a pilgrimage through the provinces underground, and while he was there he took the form of a serpent. When he returned to the world above ground, he reverted back to human form and was deified as one of the gods of Suwa.
According to the "Shintoshu" Koka Saburo Yoritaka was the feudal lord of the Omi Koka district. He became lost in a cave in Shinano (present day Nagano) when he was searching for Princess Kasuka who had been abducted by a Tengu...

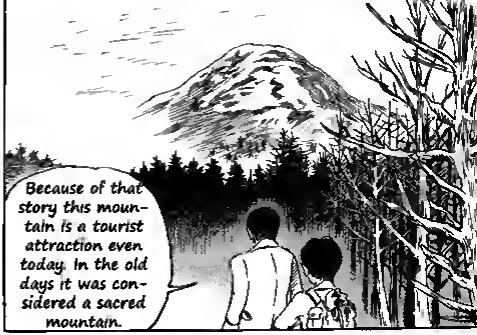

Fufu... Just bide your time and leave it to me.
Is there something written there that is connected with Father's death?

That's what I thought!

But Saburo did not bring the treasure out. Instead he died below ground and then took the form of a serpent that guards the treasure...

No... Perhaps I should tell you this much... According to Kyoran's explanation there's an even older legend than the one in "Shintoshu." It says that Koka Saburo found an enormous treasure below ground


So.. Father was searching for Koka Saburo's treasure..?


Because of that story this mountain is a tourist attraction even today. In the old days it was considered a sacred mountain.

We're leaving the trail.

That's right. The murderer must have seized the treasure from him...

This is where your father died.

ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ

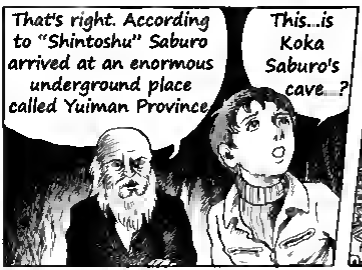
This Koizumi guy seems a little fishy though he is acting polite enough
Who was that I wonder... Man? Woman?... Young? Old?.. I have no idea...
Here. But why would he have taken a child with him to hunt for treasure
In other words he walked down here from above..
Hey ...?
Wait a sec! I recall that Father fell on this hill face down with his head pointing downhill..

Y- you...
Ah!
What are you waiting for? That's the place.
So you got here first, old man. "The Secret Book of Shinano" was indeed there. Now what?
They know each other...
Try overturning that first stone Buddha. I doubt if it's very heavy.
What !?
I guess I'll show you around Koka Saburo's cave...
ゴロ
Roll
Hey. Give me a hand.

The inside is surprisingly large..
It is well hidden. In the old days no one would have dared touch the Buddha.
But there's one thing I don't get, old man. If you knew about this, why did you call me
The old man is fishy too And he knew about me
Fufu...
Oh I see. You need help. How about a 50-50 split?
crunch
バリ...
!?
Don't be in such a hurry. If you fall you could injure yourself.

Wh- who's scared...

Wh- what's this...
It's scary isn't it? It's just skeletons. Nothing to get upset about.


That's right. According to "Shintoshu" Saburo arrived at an enormous underground place called Yuiman Province.
This...is Koka Saburo's cave...?

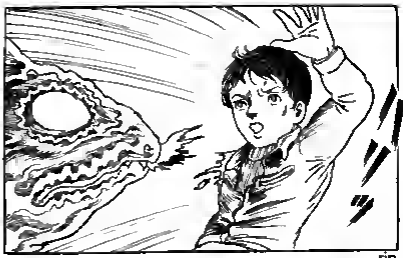
Fu fu. Seems you're a simple man.

And the cave is enormous. It could easily connect with the lava caves of Mount Asama.
Pottery from the Jomon Period. It might be as old as 5000 BCE.
Koka Saburo's story is from the Middle Ages. It seems people have lived in this cave since ancient times. Look!
You have to think there must be a reason they all died here together..
And all these skeletons with no sign of burial.
Damn!
Something must have happened. Maybe war or a plague.
Wh-why
Hmm. Look at that.
Old man, you aren't holding back on me are you? Or could someone have taken it before us!?
Bones! Bones! Nothing but bones! Where is the treasure!?

L- look at his head...
That's a lot more recent than those other bones.
Isn't that wound from fangs? Here.
But that doesn't mean there isn't any.
Huh ...!
I have no recollection of treasure ever being here.
Possibly... retribution for treading on holy ground..
Forget about that!
ケラ…
What is it for the last few minutes I haven't been able to shake the feeling that something else is here...
There's probably some clue. Check around carefully.

clatter clatter
smash
creeaakk
wobble
Damn. It's pitch dark. The light! The light!
There's something behind! The treasure!
There's something in the darkness back here
rattle rattle
Don't get flustered Kotaro.
Just give it to me!

throb

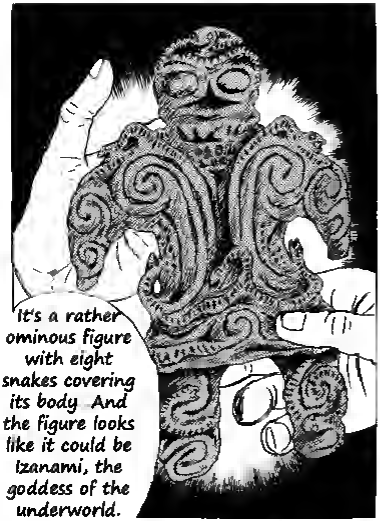


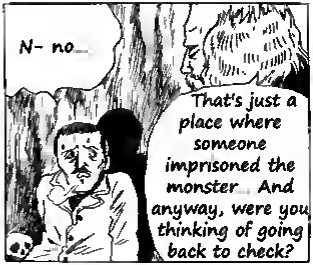
rip

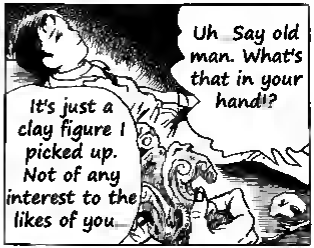
rattle rattle

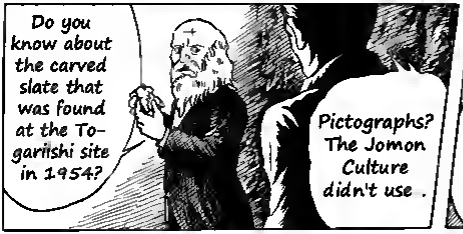
rattle

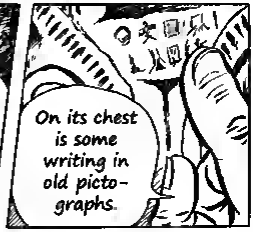
ガチャ
ガチャ
H-hel...
カラン!
ガチャ
ガチャ
ガチャ
ガチャ
Oh! The treasure! It must be back there..
No. Nothing like that is back there...

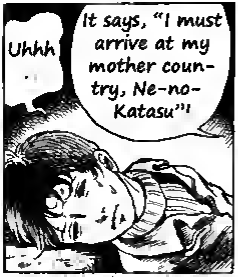

It's a rather ominous figure with eight snakes covering its body. And the figure looks like it could be Izanami, the goddess of the underworld.



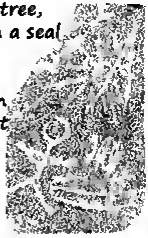








A person, a tree, the sun with a seal attached. It seems like the depiction of an ancient event.*



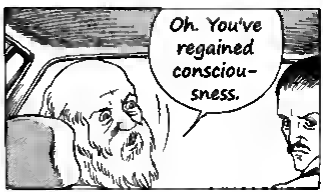
* Hiromichi Ohba "Ancient Pictographs of Japan" (1975)

That's okay. At this rate we can go straight into San'in.

Old man, we've already passed Ohmi.

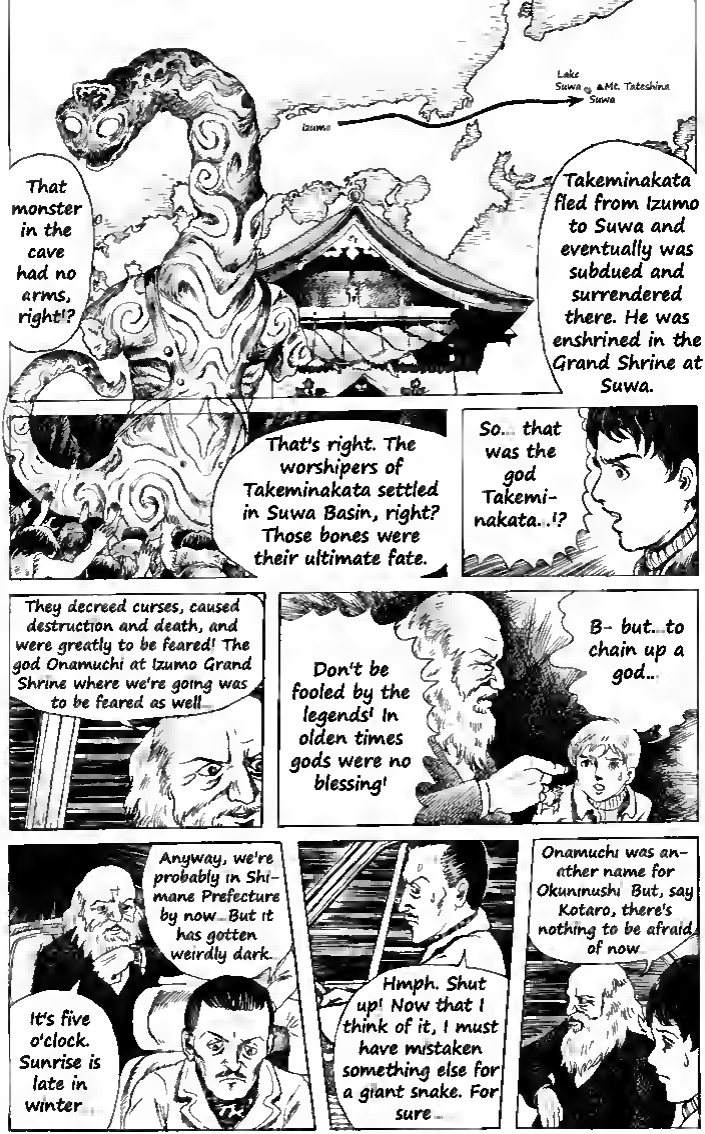
Fu fu... You're a persistent fellow aren't you.
I don't get it. Didn't Koka Saburo take the treasure back to Ohmi?

Ah... owowo ..


Oh. You've regained consciou-sness.

When it suddenly started hurting in the cave, I remembered clearly how I got it. Do you know anything about it?
So that's your scar from ten years ago. Of course.
"Ne-no-Katasu" is the ancient nome for the old Izumo Province. Supposedly the people of ancient Suwa originally migrated from Izumo.
Izumo !?
Hmm. In any case, we'll know when we reach Izumo.
Winter
A Sand Dune in Tottori—
But he is onto something. I should stay with him a little while longer.
What is this old fart thinking anyway ?
Kikuchi? That brat?
We should hurry. Kikuchi from Kyushu is on the move.

Koizumi's car has come! And the boy is with him.
Mr. Kikuchi!
Orion is so pretty
beau-tiful
Okay, Daita. Follow them. They'll be going to Izumo for sure
Eight snakes makes one think of the eight-forked serpent Yamato no Orochi
Takeminakata, son of the god Okuninushi, challenged the god Takemikazuchi to a test of strength. Takemikazuchi pulled out Takeminakata's arms like ripping grass from the ground
That legend originated in Izumo, and Izumo has always been a place where culture flourished


Lake Suwa
Mt. Tateshina
Suwa
Izumo
That monster in the cave had no arms, right!?
Takeminakata fled from Izumo to Suwa and eventually was subdued and surrendered there. He was enshrined in the Grand Shrine at Suwa.
That's right. The worshipers of Takeminakata settled in Suwa Basin, right? Those bones were their ultimate fate.
So... that was the god Takemi-nakata..!?
They decreed curses, caused destruction and death, and were greatly to be feared! The god Onamuchi at Izumo Grand Shrine where we're going was to be feared as well
Don't be fooled by the legends! In olden times gods were no blessing!
B- but...to chain up a god...
Anyway, we're probably in Shi-mane Prefecture by now...But it has gotten weirdly dark.
It's five o'clock. Sunrise is late in winter
Hmph. Shut up! Now that I think of it, I must have mistaken something else for a giant snake. For sure...
Onamuchi was an-other name for Okunnushi But, say Kotaro, there's nothing to be afraid of now

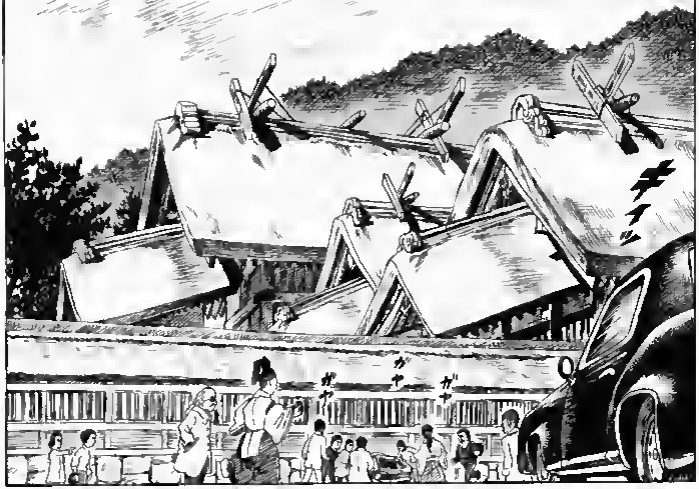
For that reason the ancient peoples
That monster and Onamuchi_ what exactly were they and where did they come from? Nobody knows
Oh well..it'll be getting light soon...
worshiped them as gods, feared them as demons, and called them "dark gods"
Hold on a minute! No matter how you look at it, the sun should have risen by now!
It's six-thirty ! We should at least be seeing some light.
It_ it won't stop. Even though I've been hitting the brakes for while_!
Kotaro! Stop the car!
The light from my headlights is not going anywhere .. I can't see the road!
What is this darkness!? Hey, Kotaro!

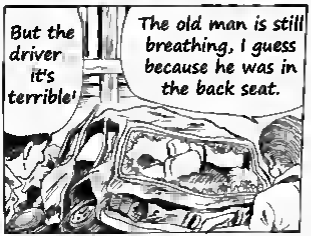
Anyway, let's make for the Grand Shrine!
Hmm..It's strange The sun is well up in the sky and there's plenty of light
Did we lose them? But there's only one road!
Dark... dark gods...
What's going on!? I've even killed the motor... The car just keeps hurtling into the darkness!!
It's Onamuchi! Onamuchi, god of the Grand Shrine at Izumo is pulling us in!!
Kataro you have been tricked by an Edo Period heretic. There was never any treasure.
Wh-what ...!?
But what about the treasure? The treasure!?
What might he be after? This clay figure..!? That crest on your arm..!?

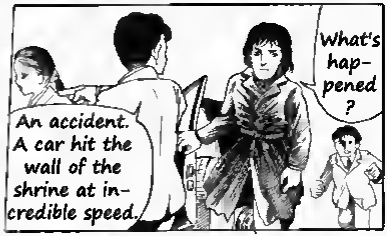
All that business about treasure and snakes was legends invented to camouflage that cave's true horror! Koka Saburo tread on sacred ground and was killed for it.
From the start you meant to take me to Izumo...
The one who tricked me me... was you! You've been using me!
Listen! For some reason your father met Takeminakata in that cave in Suwa.
But why... could he have killed father..
But because he died and you were right there, Takeminakata placed his seal on you.
No... that..
I'm gonna kill you if you don't stop this car. Stop it!
Ah... Ah
Up ahead!

I've been waiting for you for you!

I've been waiting! I have been waiting!




But the driver it's terrible!
The old man is still breathing, I guess because he was in the back seat.


What's happened?
An accident. A car hit the wall of the shrine at incredible speed.

He wasn't there!?

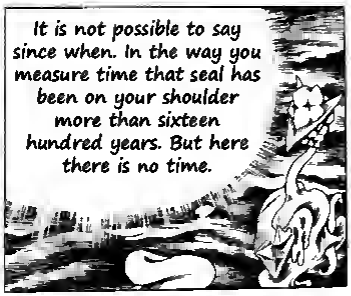
Half his head is gone! Almost like it was ripped off..

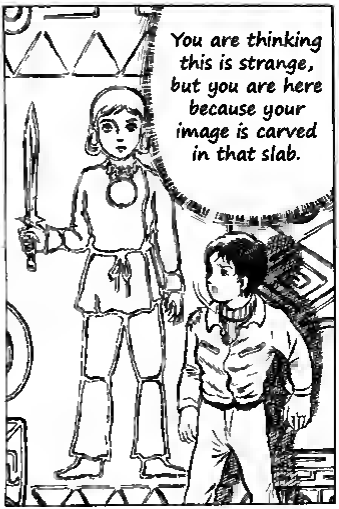
Child? No, there were only two in the car
What about the other person... the child

The Chapter of the Asura

This carving... it looks like me... surely not...
Wh-where am I...
Onamuchi... oh I get it... this is a dream...
It is not a dream, and there is nothing to fear. Onamuchi has employed me, his herald, to summon you here.

In the words you like to use it has been called nirvana, heaven, the underworld, or paradise...
Wh- who are you...? If this is not dream, where am I...

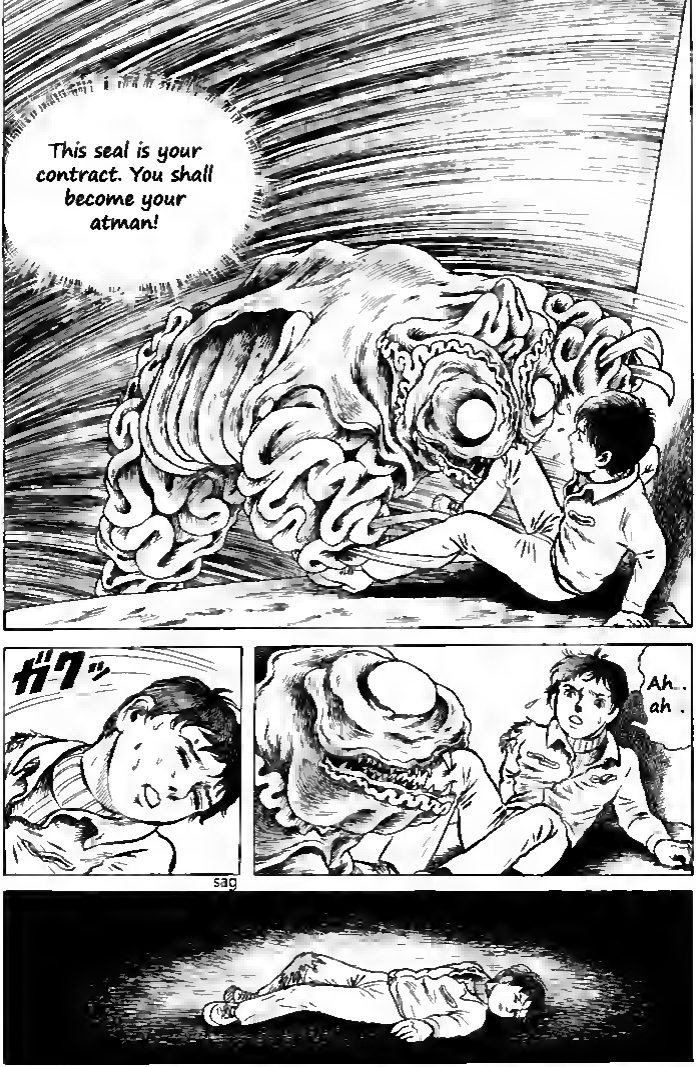

It is not possible to say since when. In the way you measure time that seal has been on your shoulder more than sixteen hundred years. But here there is no time.

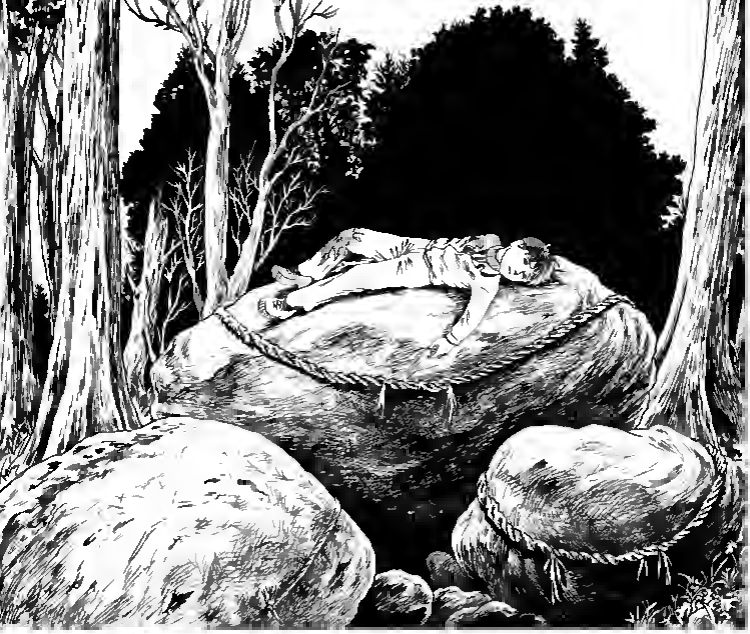

You are thinking this is strange, but you are here because your image is carved in that slab.

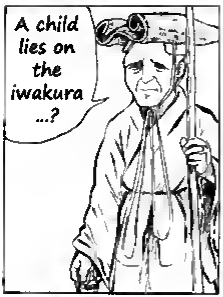
Who are you! And what seal are you talking about!?

I am the balance between eternal nothingness and eternal power, between all space and time
I am no one. There is no word to express who I am. If forced to say something, I can merely say that I am the Highest Truth.

The Onamuchi that you see as well as me and you are but small pieces of a cog in the machinery he uses to move all the universe.
True self... power ...?
My true self, my atman, has received the authority and power to move this one cog.
ユラッ
wobble
Gasp!
You are remembering the cave in Suwa! You are correct! If you had this power, you would be able to slay hundreds of millions of people in hundreds of places at once.


This seal is your contract. You shall become your atman!
ガクッ
Ah. . ah. .
sag





It was believed that boulders such as these were places where gods landed as they came from heaven. The belief was called "Kyoseki Shinko" (Megalith Worship.)

An "iwakura" is a "seat of the gods" Large rock slabs in remote areas or high in the mountains were often called "iwakura."

That's right. Thanks for your concern
With you ..?
That child is with us.
creak
thud
Don't wake him He'll feel better if we let him sleep.
Hmm... That's right. We let him rest there a minute.
But it seems he is injured ...?
Wh- who knows ? Since ancient times they have been worshiped as "The Three Stone Lords"..
By the way, these three stones must surely have some kind of history, right?
That's right. We had extremely good luck to find him here in Kyushu .
Mr. Kikuchi, to find this child here that we were pursuing in Izumo..
Ohh.. Lord Daishi
There is a legend that Kobo Daishi (known as Kukai) used these stones as a hama-madala (Buddhist fire altar) when he was studying the Mikkyou (Buddhist esoteric teachings)

ゴシ
It seems like a rather old inscription.

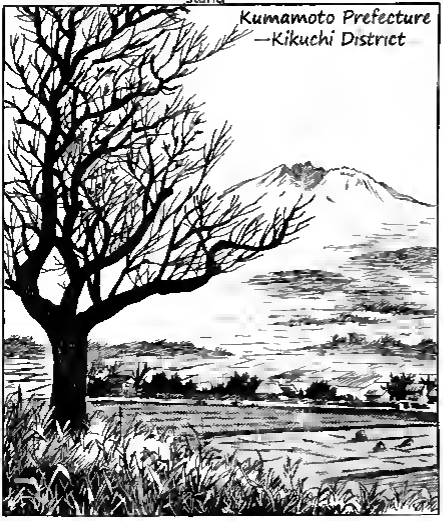
There's something carved here.

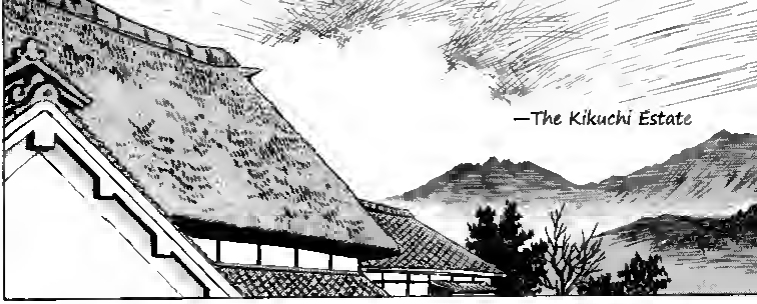
But how did he get to Kyushu... We came by airplane, yet he got here before us.
Never mind that. Hurry and start the car!
slam

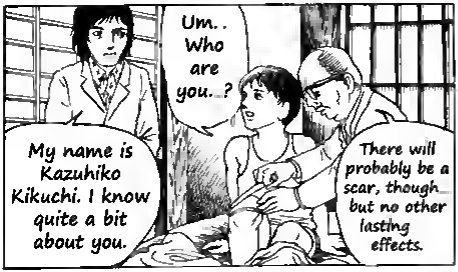
stand

vroom
"Shin has a ferocious lust for blood. Rago invites disaster."

參猛惡好血
羅睺招災害

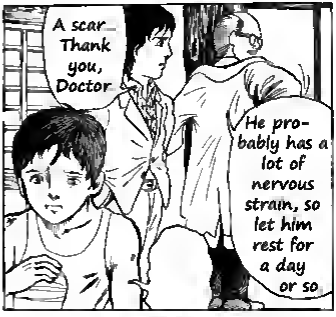

Kumamoto Prefecture
—Kikuchi District

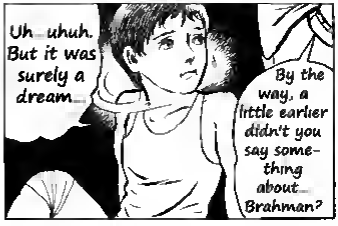

—The Kikuchi Estate

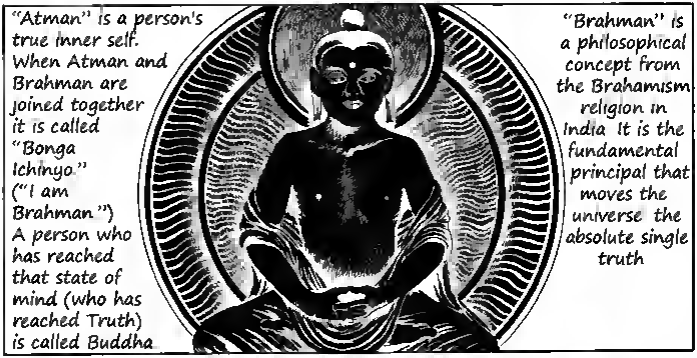

Um.. Who are you..?
My name is Kazuhiko Kikuchi. I know quite a bit about you.
There will probably be a scar, though... but no other lasting effects.

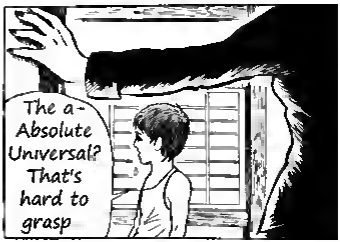
This wound is almost healed.

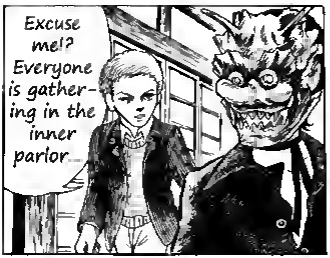
Have you ever heard that word "Brahmon" before? If not, how could you dream about it?
A dream? Are those snake-shaped scars on your shoulder and knee a dream?


A scar... Thank you, Doctor
He probably has a lot of nervous strain, so let him rest for a day or so


Uh... uhuh. But it was surely a dream...
By the way, a little earlier didn't you say something about... Brahman?

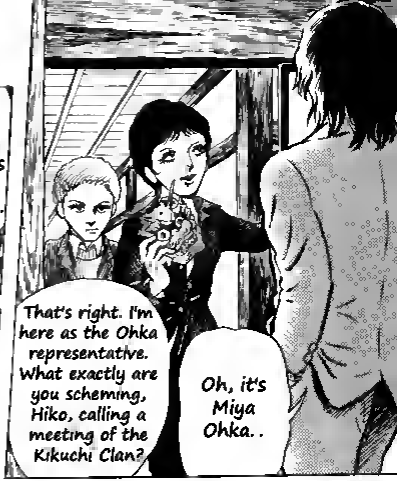

"Atman" is a person's true inner self. When Atman and Brahman are joined together it is called "Bonga Ichinyo." ("I am Brahman.") A person who has reached that state of mind (who has reached Truth) is called Buddha
"Brahman" is a philosophical concept from the Brahamism religion in India. It is the fundamental principal that moves the universe. the absolute single truth


The a-Absolute Universal? That's hard to grasp


Excuse me!? Everyone is gathering in the inner parlor...

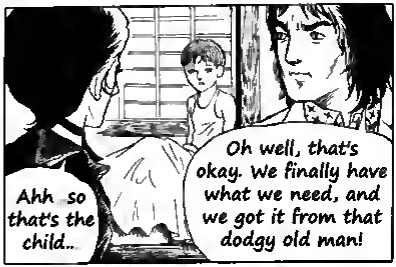
Who are you? This is no time for pranks!

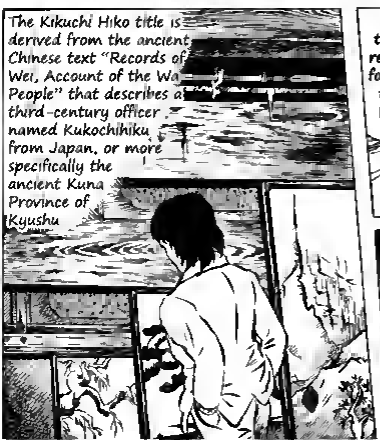
There was a message from Izumo.
I'll tell you later. What is it, Hayato.


Oh, it's Miya Ohka..
That's right. I'm here as the Ohka representative. What exactly are you scheming, Hiko, calling a meeting of the Kikuchi Clan?

Takeuchi? The old man. survived?
Yes, sir.. He had only minor contusions. He's a lucky fellow.

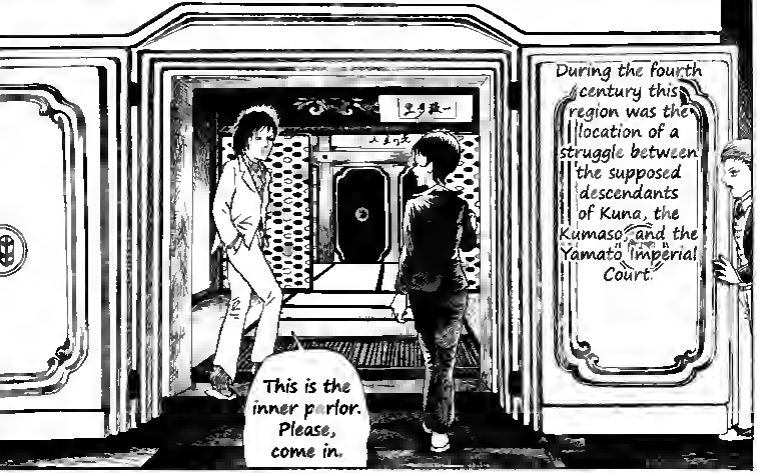
Don't worry about them. They're all Kikuchi relatives.


Oh well, that's okay. We finally have what we need, and we got it from that dodgy old man!
Ahh so that's the child..

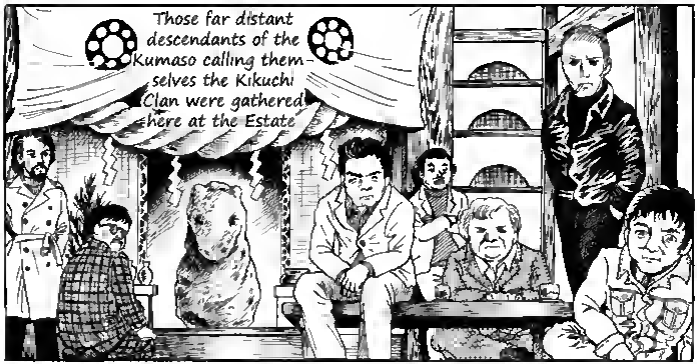

The Kikuchi Hiko title is derived from the ancient Chinese text "Records of Wei, Account of the Wa People" that describes a third-century officer named Kukochihiku from Japan, or more specifically the ancient Kuna Province of Kyushu

What did she mean by, "Hiko?"
Oh you heard that... It is a hereditary title used for generations by the head of the Kikuchi clan.

I am the seventy-third Hiko of the Kikuchi Clan. Now, get some rest.

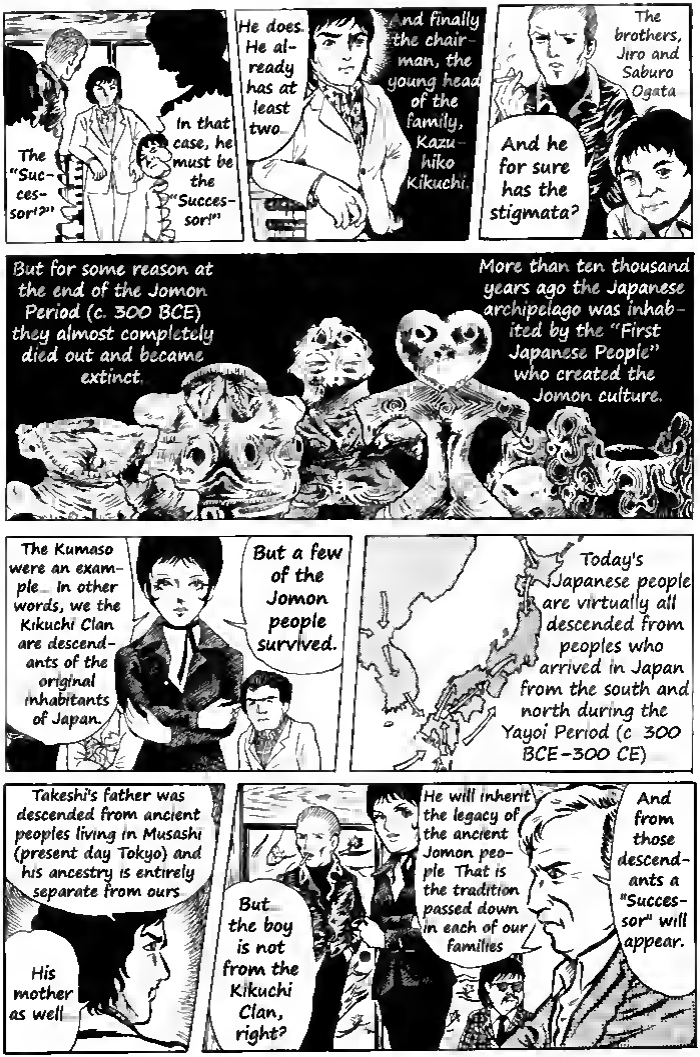

During the fourth century this region was the location of a struggle between the supposed descendants of Kuna, the Kumaso, and the Yamato Imperial Court.
This is the inner parlor. Please, come in.

Just what you'd expect from the descendants of Kumaso... the masters of the Kikuchi Estate


Those far distant descendants of the Kumaso calling themselves the Kikuchi Clan were gathered here at the Estate

The Hayato heir, Hayato Osumi, and his companions

The Aso...
The Ohka...


The "Successor?"
In that case, he must be the "Successor!"
He does. He already has at least two.
And finally the chairman, the young head of the family, Kazuhiko Kikuchi.
The brothers, Jiro and Saburo Ogata
And he for sure has the stigmata?
But for some reason at the end of the Jomon Period (c. 300 BCE) they almost completely died out and became extinct.
More than ten thousand years ago the Japanese archipelago was inhabited by the "First Japanese People" who created the Jomon culture.
The Kumaso were an example. In other words, we the Kikuchi Clan are descendants of the original inhabitants of Japan.
But a few of the Jomon people survived.
Today's Japanese people are virtually all descended from peoples who arrived in Japan from the south and north during the Yayoi Period (c. 300 BCE–300 CE)
Takeshi's father was descended from ancient peoples living in Musashi (present day Tokyo) and his ancestry is entirely separate from ours
His mother as well
But the boy is not from the Kikuchi Clan, right?
He will inherit the legacy of the ancient Jomon people. That is the tradition passed down in each of our families
And from those descendants a "Successor" will appear.

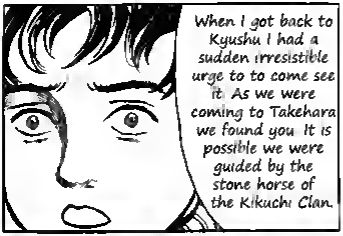
It was in Takeshi's pocket... That's your specialty, right Aso? I want you to check it out.
I don't know, but there is a clue. First, take this.
What exactly is the legacy?
The only example of a stone horse kofun outside Kyushu is the Ishiumadani Kofun in Tottori, which is in the cultural sphere of Izumo.
And speaking of stone horses, the mountain kofun (burial mound) of one of our Kikuchi ancestors, Tsukushi-no-Kimi Iwai* features stone figures and a stone horse...
Next, this stone horse is called "The Spotted Steed of Heaven." It has been in the Kikuchi family for many generations, but only the head...
Izuma, Kyushu, the Kikuchi Clan. There is a puzzle here. And more. This horse is a carving of the flying horse that our patron god, Lord Susanoo...
No one touched it, but half the face of the stone horse has fallen off!
Hiko, look!
skinned in heaven and threw into the room where Amaterasu was weaving...

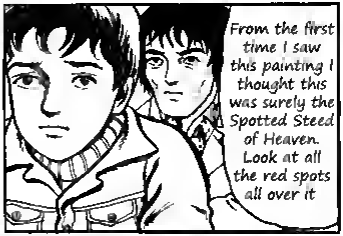
* Iwai : A powerful sixth century clan from Kyushu that led an insurrection against the Yamato Imperial Court

The dark god Susanoo shall appear again in this world!
Our family has a legend! When the Spotted Steed of Heaven is broken
No! The time has come!
Hiko! It is an evil omen!
Do you know my mother?
I have already contacted your mother. There is nothing to worry about
But I really need to go home. Mom will be worried about me.
There's something I want to show you
Where are we going?
After you disappeared in Izumo even you don't have any idea how you ended up sleeping on this boulder. Don't you remember anything?
Your mother didn't ask anything about me. But I'll tell you about it later.

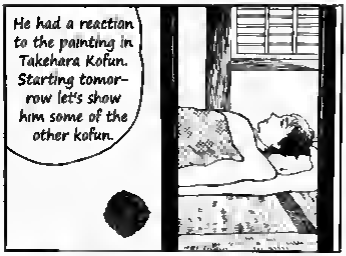
It is a decorated kofun from the sixth century. It lies within the grounds of this Suwa Shrine.
史蹟
竹原古墳
Takehara Kofun?
Oh well. There's something else I want to show you just over there.
It's this kofun. I believe there is a connection between it and the three stones.
Unfortunately we can't enter the stone room. Just observe it from here.
It is a branch of the Suwa Grand Shrine in Shinano. It doesn't seem like a coincidence that after going from Suwa to Izumo you appeared here.
Suwa!?
A decorated kofun means that the stone walls are covered with paintings and patterns. There are many such kofun in Kyushu, but Takehara is famous for its especially powerful painting.

It has a horn and talons and its tail grows out long like a snake! Flames blow out from all over its body and its mouth! What could this monster represent?
Takehara Kofun is in the Kurate District of Fukuoka Prefecture. It is in the town of Wakamiya on the grounds of the Takehara-no-Suwa Shrine. The most striking feature of the painting is the mysterious horse god in the top center


When I got back to Kyushu I had a sudden irresistible urge to to come see it. As we were coming to Takehara we found you. It is possible we were guided by the stone horse of the Kikuchi Clan.

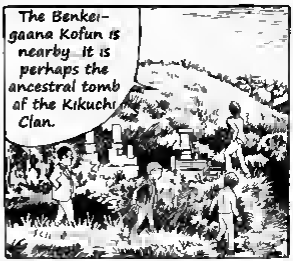

From the first time I saw this painting I thought this was surely the Spotted Steed of Heaven. Look at all the red spots all over it

COME NOW!
COME!
COME RECEIVE YOUR SEAL!

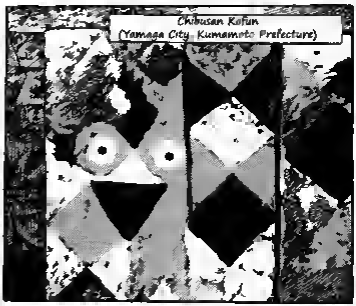

He had a reaction to the painting in Takehara Kofun. Starting tomorrow let's show him some of the other kofun.

What happened!

I am guessing that the paintings and patterns of these decorated kofun hold the key to the riddle of the dark gods

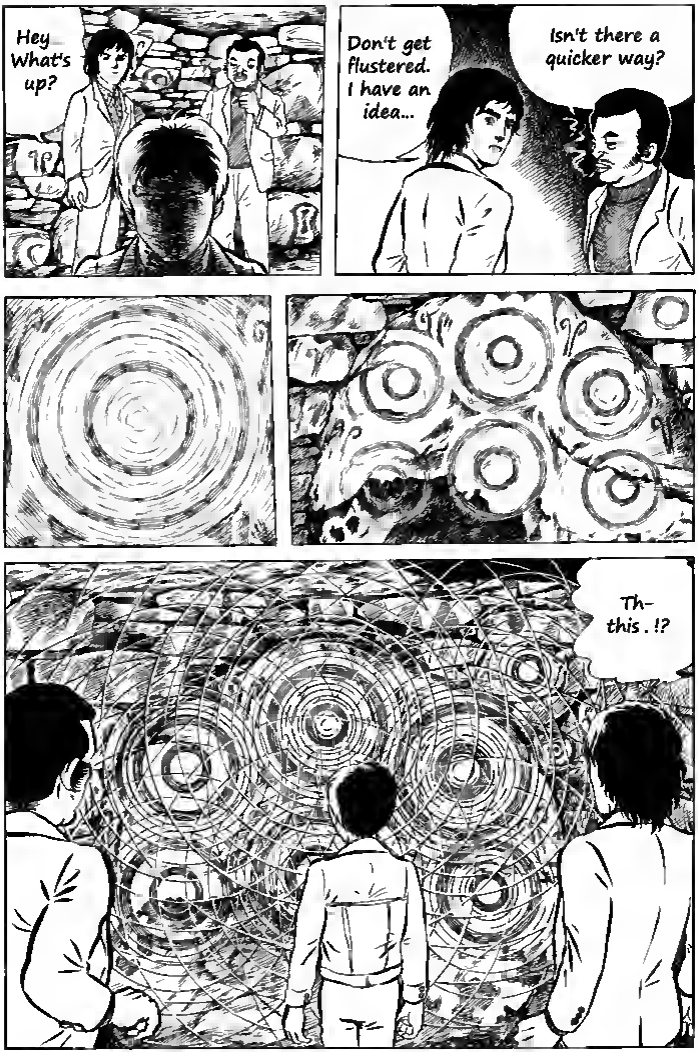

The Benkei-gaana Kofun is nearby it is perhaps the ancestral tomb of the Kikuchi Clan.

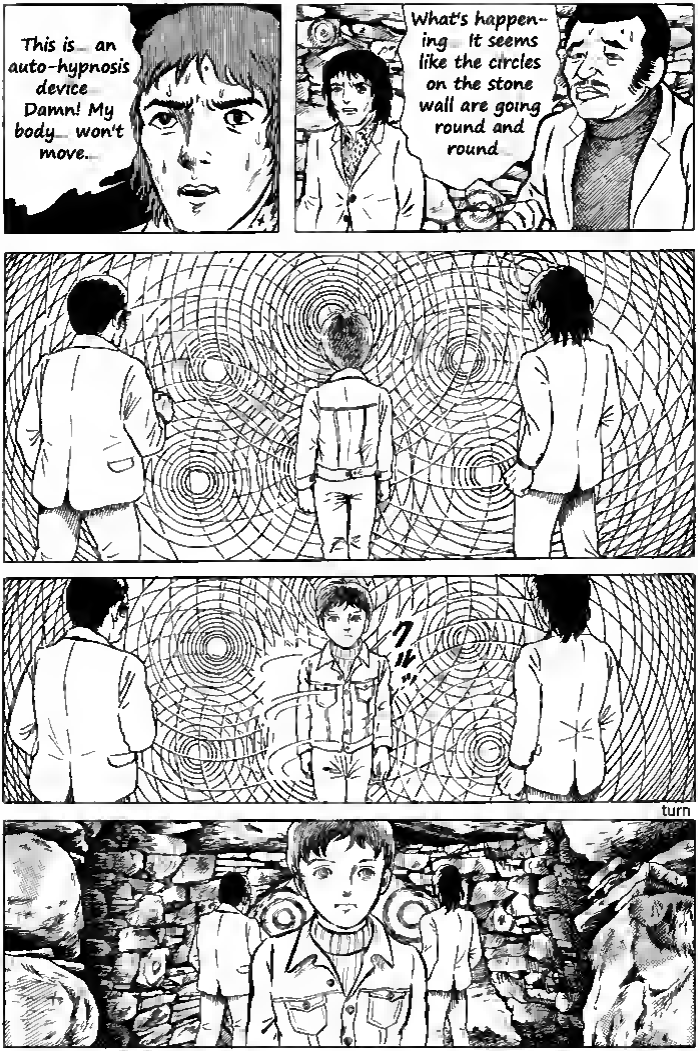
Huh. It looks like his chest has been gouged out.
This also probably has some kind of mystical meaning.

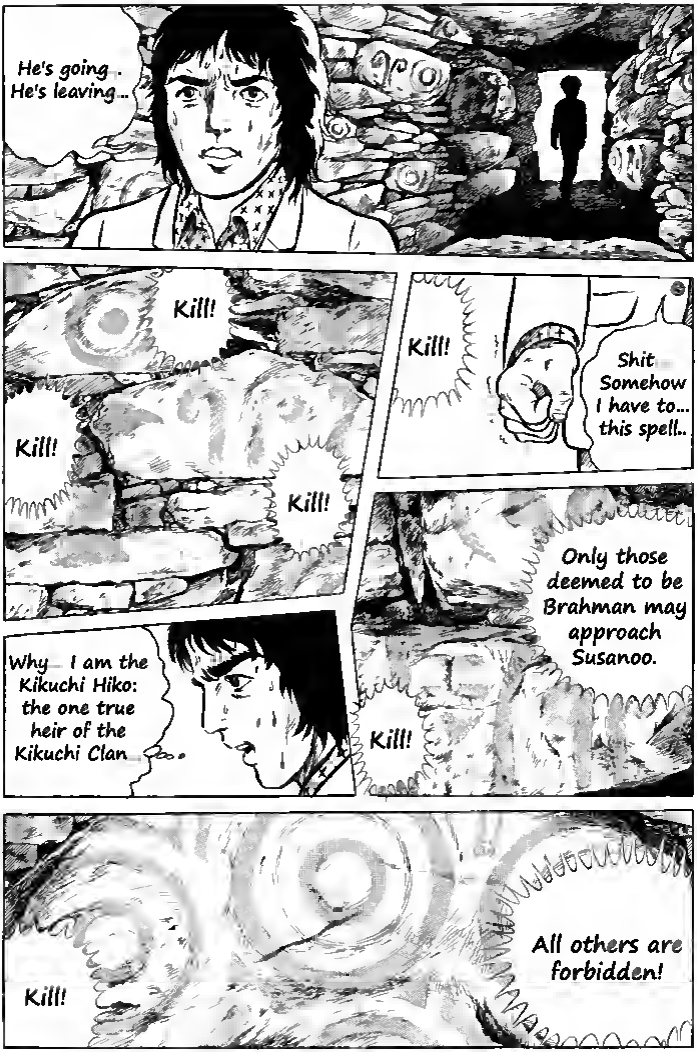

Chibusan Kofun
(Yamaga City, Kumamoto Prefecture)

Nagiwa Tomb

It is true that wandering around these decorated kofun had awakened something within Takeshi...
No, that's not right. Since yesterday Takeshi seems a little different.
Is this worth it? The only place he had a reaction was Takehara Kofun...
Mezurashizuka Kofun
Even as he was thinking these thoughts, Takeshi's heart was drawn to the mystical patterns of the kofun. And so he was led further and further on...
"As I continue, it seems like something unspeakably terrifying is waiting for me"...
After this we'll go to Tsukahanazuka and Garandoya. Then I think we'll call it a day...
Hiruko Kofun


Hey
What's up?
Don't get flustered. I have an idea...
Isn't there a quicker way?
Th-this.!?


This is... an auto-hypnosis device... Damn! My body... won't move...
What's happening... It seems like the circles on the stone wall are going round and round...
クルッ
turn

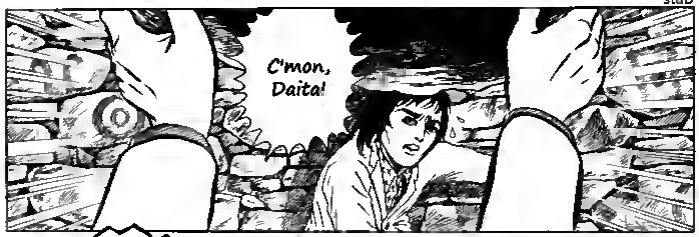

He's going..
He's leaving..
Kill!
Kill!
Kill!
Kill!
Shit
Somehow I have to... this spell..
Only those deemed to be Brahman may approach Susanoo.
Why... I am the Kikuchi Hiko: the one true heir of the Kikuchi Clan...
Kill!
All others are forbidden!
Kill!

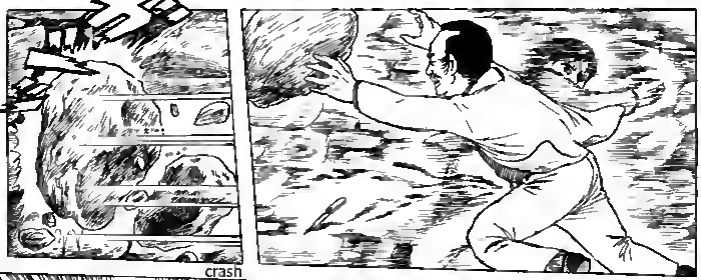
Kill!
Kill each other!
Kill your companion!

N- no Daita, stop

Sh shit

stab

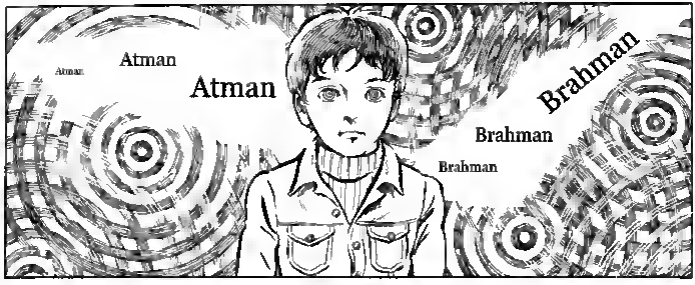

C'mon, Daita!

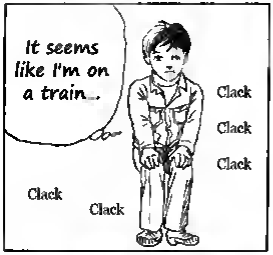

crash

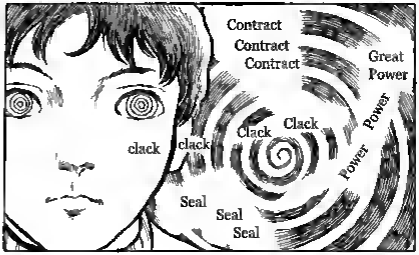
バラバラ
clatter clatter

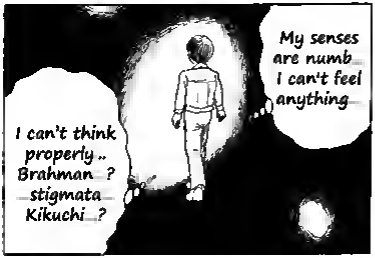
Daita!
Guwah !!
splurt
slip
gush!
splatter

It isn't like me to get caught like this...
Damn!
I'm fine, but Takeshi ran off. Go find Takeshi!
What happened! That wound...!?
Lord Hiko!
Wait Hayato! Takeshi is in a trance like sleepwalking. Follow him and find out where he goes!
Yes sir!

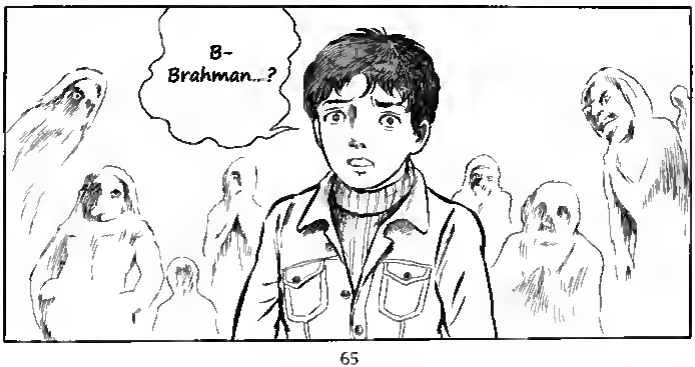

Atman
Atman
Atman
Brahman
Brahman
Brahman


It seems like I'm on a train...
Clack
Clack
Clack
Clack
Clack


Contract
Contract
Contract
Great Power
clack
clack
Clack
Clack
Power
Power
Seal
Seal
Seal

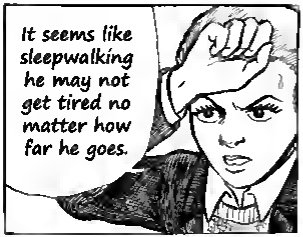

My senses are numb... I can't feel anything...
I can't think properly.. Brahman...? ...stigmata... Kikuchi...?

I hear someone's voice... I wonder where I am...


B-
Brahman...?

I am Brahman. I am the envoy of the dark gods. Well? Have you decided?
Have you decided?
De-cided?
Have you decided?
That kofun is a guidepost for the Chosen. For all others it serves to protect the secret by preventing them from approaching.
Se-cret
Secret
The secret
Keep the secret.
You must keep the secret
What... power will you give to me...?
Secret.. The secret power...?

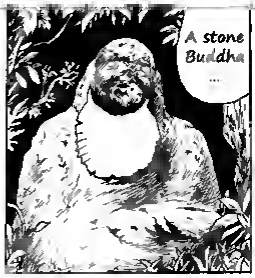
Atman.
It seems you have decided. That is good enough. You are Atman.
For that purpose you shall meet with Susanoo who rules the darkness in a place far, far away.
You shall be joined with Brahman, the fundamental principle, and become Chakravartin, the ideal ruler of the universe.
But now is not yet the time. Your body shall receive eight carved seals in all.
You have already received one in Suwa and one in Izumo. This will be the third. When you have received the eighth you shall have received them all..!
You shall fulfill your destiny!


It seems like sleepwalking he may not get tired no matter how far he goes.

He jumped on a train and changed at Oita. After he got off here in Kunisakihanto he walked three or four miles

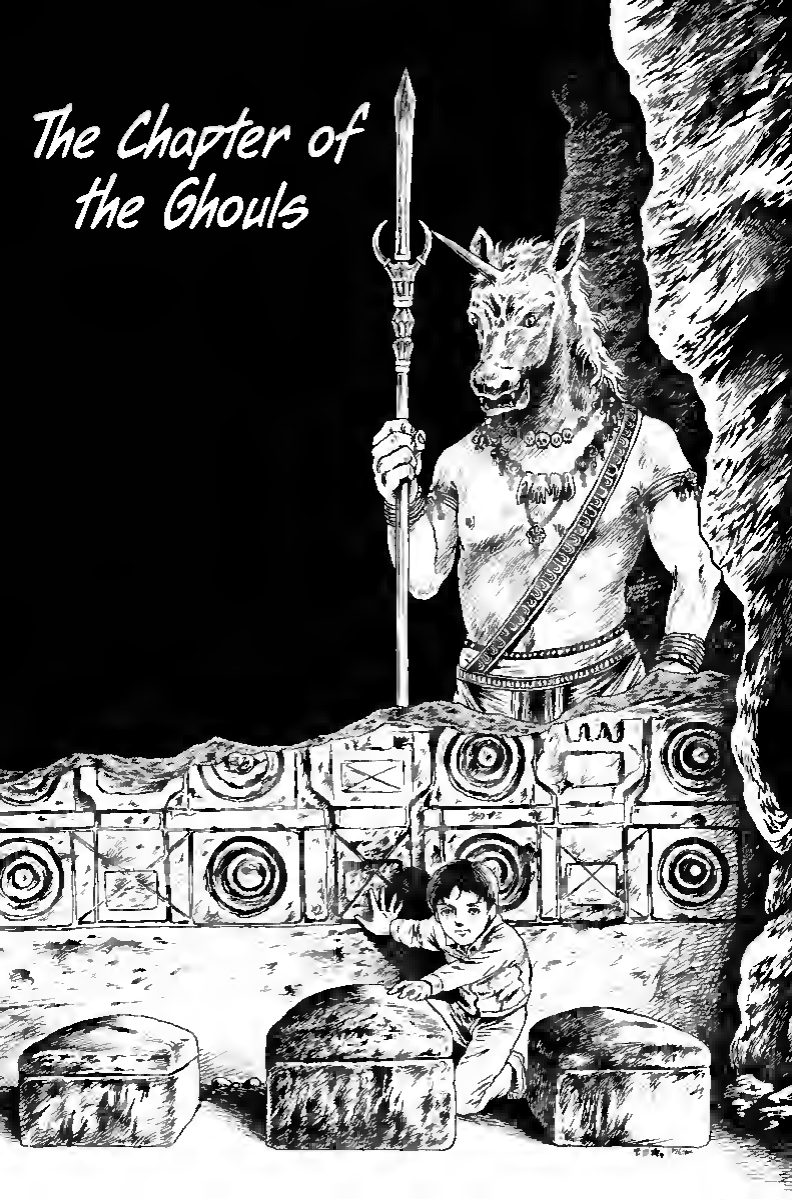
I'm fairly certain he climbed this mountain road

Oh right. This area is famous for Magaibutsu.


A stone Buddha ...

Takahishi, without knowing it, had been guided by the Brahman deep into the mountains of Kunisaki.
Takehara Kofun
Fukuoka
Hinooka Kofun
Iwatoyama Kofun
Chibusan Kofun
Kikuchi
Naigaiwa Tomb
Mount Aso
Kumamoto
Kunisaki-hantō
Usa
Oita
Magaibutsu are the images of Buddha carved into the natural face of a stone cliff or boulder. From time immemorial Buddhism has flourished in the mountains of Kunisakihanto in Oita Prefecture. There are many Magaibutsu remaining in the most impregnable mountain recesses.

Ahh!
Takeshi...!?


The Chapter of
the Ghouls

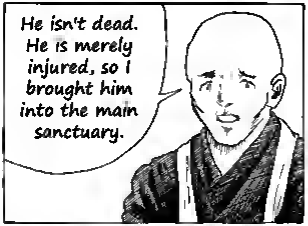
—A Secluded Region in Kunisaki—
I thought I told you to wait back at the Kikuchi Estate. These mountain recesses are no place for a woman.
As a member of the Kikuchi Clan, it is my right and duty to protect the interests of the Ohka.
Don't worry. My injury isn't that bad.
Hiko, shouldn't you walk more slowly?
There!

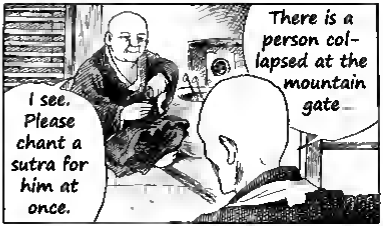
I'm sorry. During the interval when I went to contact you...
W-well..
He can't have gone far. Let's divide up and search.
Don't worry about it. We've gotten a step closer to our objective.
Hmm...
Here, Hayato! What about Takeshi!?
Lord Hiko!

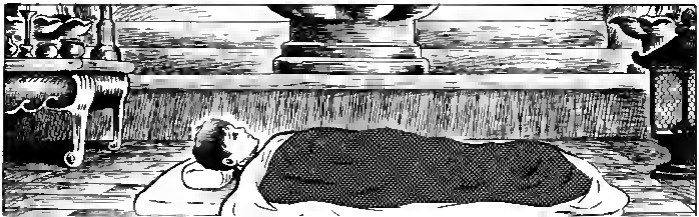
餓鬼寺

Sea-ki-Ji

Lord High Priest! Lord High Priest!

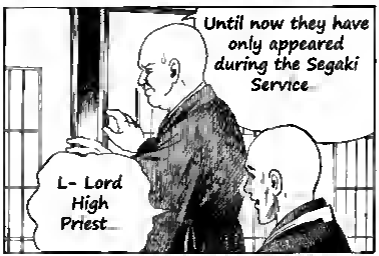

He isn't dead. He is merely injured, so I brought him into the main sanctuary.


There is a person collapsed at the mountain gate.
I see. Please chant a sutra for him at once.



Speaking of which, it will soon be time for the next Segaki Service.
Even our head temple Enryaku-ji has showed some decline. There is a reason.
What? It's not like this temple is the only one.
Lord High Priest, please act according to your position. This temple used to be called the "Hiei of the West" but now it just keeps going further into decline.
You think that's the same as fish!?
I suggest you nibble on one of the wooden fish-head gongs.
There's no need for all that quibbling.
It would be better for us if you could at least try to stay sober then.
That's right. Very soon the great monk Lord Jikuu will be coming to inspect us.
Shut up! Forget that and bring me some fish!
Th- this is no time for jokes! C- come look in the main sanctuary!
What! Did the liquor store send the tab?
Oh! Oh! Lord High Priest!... It's incredible...!
Oh!?
What about it?

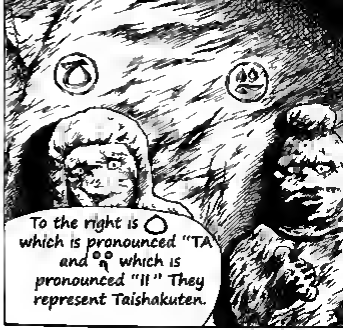
ズ


Until now they have only appeared during the Segaki Service
L- Lord High Priest

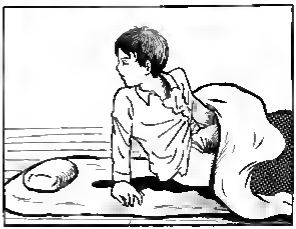
What's happening with the ghouls.

I'm curious what you are planning to do here
Aren't you going to go look for Takeshi?
Hmm. It's no big deal. I want to read those Sanskrit charocters carved in the rock.
Above the heads of each of those four Buddhas. Do you know how to read Sanskrit?
Sanskrit?
The character to the left of that represents Yasha and is pronounced "YA."
That one there represents Kujaku Myooh. 𑖨 is pronounced "MA"
They are called "shuji" Each is as single Siddham Sanskrit character that stands as an abbreviation of a Buddha's name
No idea?

Seventeen hundred years ago somewhere in Japan there was a kingdom called Yamatai...

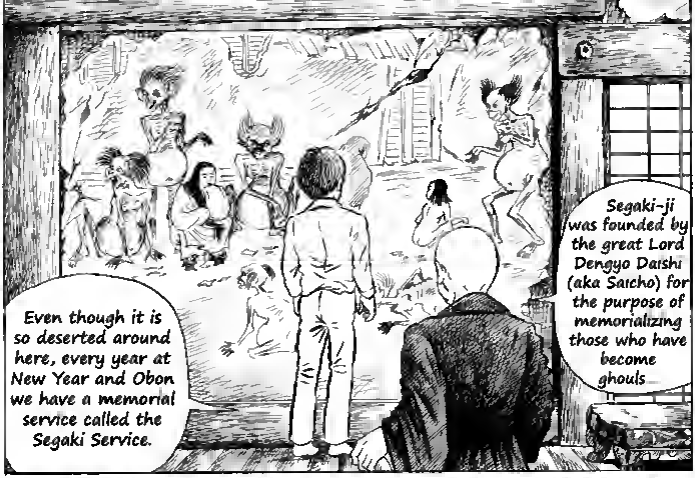

To the right is 𓁹 which is pronounced "TA" and 𓁺 which is pronounced "II." They represent Taishakuten.

If you read them all from left to right it spells out "Yamatai."
But what does it mean?



Are you interested in this Buddha? It is our principle holy item, Lord Bato Kannon. The attendant statues are the Bodhisattvas Nikko and Gakko
Did you collapse on the mountain road? Please, rest as long as you like.
Oh. You have awakened.
Up in the mountains behind the temple lies a Bato Kannon carved in stone. That one is completely just the horse's head.
When this temple was built that place used to be called the Inner Temple, but that magarbutsu has been there since long before then.
He is a Buddha who rescues humans who have fallen into the animal or ghoul worlds. There a horse's head atop his head, right?
Bato Kannon?
This Segaki Kannon has a particularly frightening face because he appears to be laughing violently
His is the only Kannon statue depicted as angry
At the start an incarnation of the Indian god Vishnu was incorporated into Buddhism, and he took the form of a man's body with a horse's head...
It is said that that Kannon's horsehead represents the steed ridden by Chakravartin (a legendary super-powered king of the world in Indian mythology)...

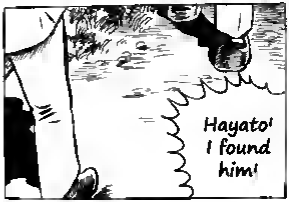
Before we eat, I'd like to examine your wound
But this stuff is just too weird, and the followers don't gather. So the monks fill their time drinking sake...
Don't you have that back-wards?
Chakravar-tin. I feel like I've heard that before ...?
Anyway, we should at least put a compress on it
And besides that, the scar
Huh? The wound has already healed, even though just awhile it go it was bleeding so much
slide
ビュン
No, just a corrupt old monk
I think you've hit the bullseye. But what do I know. I'm just a dead drunk high priest with bad eyes
It seems like you have been possessed by an evil karma
whizz


Even though it is so deserted around here, every year at New Year and Obon we have a memorial service called the Segaki Service.
Segaki-ji was founded by the great Lord Dengyo Daishi (aka Saicho) for the purpose of memorializing those who have become ghouls...

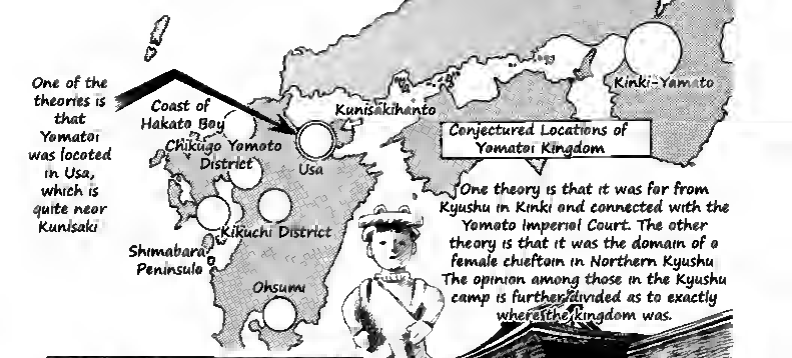
At the height of the chanting the ghouls appear and receive alms and then disappear again. I've seen it myself...
On that day only, monks come from places like Mount Hiei... they chant sutras in the main sanctuary.

When they saw you, it seemed like the ghouls were agitated and expecting you...

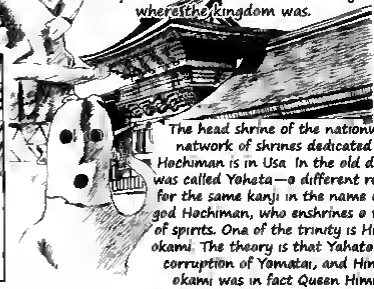
He must be in this temple!


Hayato! I found him!

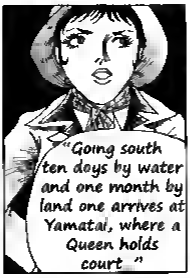
The Chinese historical text "Records of Wei" contains an "Account of the Wa People" that describes a third-century Japanese kingdom called Yamatai and its ruler, Queen Himiko. The Wa People lived throughout the ocean southeast of the Korean Peninsula and passed through the provinces of Tsushima, Iki, Matsura, Ito, Na, Fumi, and Touma to arrive at Yamatai. The ruler of that country was Queen Himiko. Using shamanism she bewitched the populace and appointed her younger brother as chief administrator. She sent ambassadors to the Wei Emperor Cao Rui to pay tribute and was awarded with a gold seal, a purple ribbon, and the title Queen of Wa Friendly to Wei.
To the south of Yamatai was an enemy country called Kuna. The ruler of that country was Kukochihiku, and it is said that he was in fact the first Kikuchi Hiko. After the death of Queen Himiko a king came into power, but he was unable to control the country. A young girl named Toya was raised as queen in his stead, and finally order was restored. The location within Japan of the Yamatai kingdom and the identity of Queen Himiko remain the biggest riddle in "Records of Wei" and are hotly disputed to this day.


One of the theories is that Yamatoi was located in Usa, which is quite near Kunisaki
Coast of Hakato Bay
Chikugo Yomoto District
Kikuchi District
Shimabara Peninsula
Ohsumi
Usa
Kunisakihanto
Kinki-Yamato
Conjectured Locations of Yamatoi Kingdom
One theory is that it was far from Kyushu in Kinki and connected with the Yomoto Imperial Court. The other theory is that it was the domain of a female chieftain in Northern Kyushu The opinion among those in the Kyushu camp is further divided as to exactly where the kingdom was.

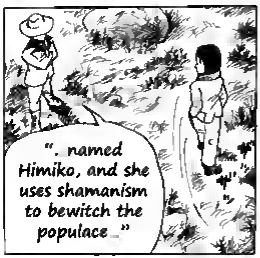
So the Yamatai Kingdom was here? What do you think Hiko?


The head shrine of the nationwide network of shrines dedicated to Hachiman is in Usa. In the old days it was called Yahata—a different reading for the same kanji in the name of the god Hachiman, who enshrines a trinity of spirits. One of the trinity is Himeokami. The theory is that Yahato was a corruption of Yamatai, and Himeokami was in fact Queen Himiko

"Further south is the country of Kuna." "Kukochihiku dwells there, but he is not under control of the Queen."
That's the Kikuchi Clan


"Going south ten days by water and one month by land one arrives at Yamatai, where a Queen holds court."

Then recite it.
Do you know the "Account of the Wo People" in "Records of Wei?"
Are you kidding? By heart!


". named Himiko, and she uses shamanism to bewitch the populace."

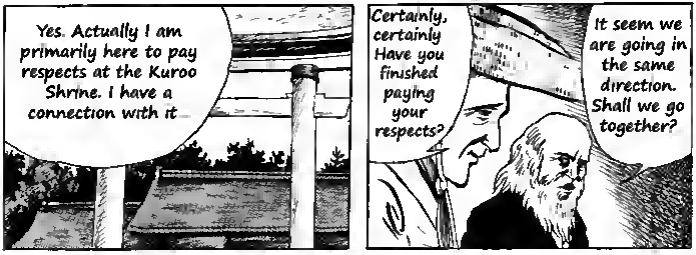
The two stone Buddhas are looking this way

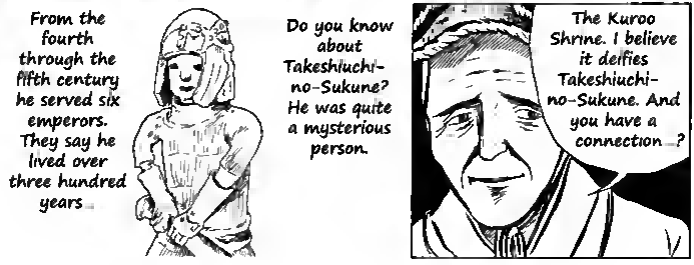
22
31

This time three of the Buddhas are staring this way
Eyes? Wh-what ?
"Though mature in age, she remained unmarried. She had a younger brother who assisted her in ruling the country."
The eyes!
ドン
shock
What if I fall back a step ?
step
Here! All four stone Buddhas are concentrating on this spot!
No! It is this Koshin monument!
It is as if the four Buddhas with Siddham Sanskrit characters overhead are trying to tell us something. The point where the gaze of all four intersects is here !

About that that time at the place that held the key to the Yamatai Kingdom, Usa Hachiman Shrine, two persons met by chance

No, no. Actually, I have business at a Rokugo temple in Kunisaki called Segaki-ji.
Oh... have you come from Mount Hiei to visit the Usa Shrine?

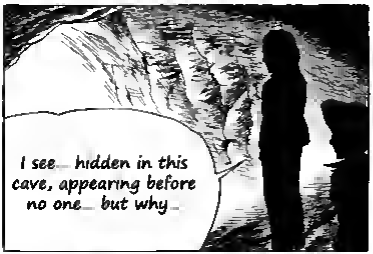

Yes. Actually I am primarily here to pay respects at the Kuroo Shrine. I have a connection with it...
Certainly, certainly Have you finished paying your respects?
It seem we are going in the same direction. Shall we go together?

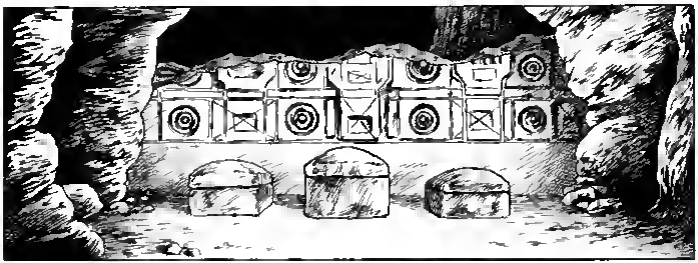

From the fourth through the fifth century he served six emperors. They say he lived over three hundred years...
Do you know about Takeshiuchi-no-Sukune? He was quite a mysterious person.
The Kuroo Shrine. I believe it deifies Takeshiuchi-no-Sukune. And you have a connection...?

That man was a suniwa—someone who conveys devine words through the medium of the sorceress possessed by a god in other words, a mediatar between gods and men.
In the Record of Wei's "Account of the Wa People" it says that only a single man was permitted to come and go from her presence
I've been thinking that possibly he also served Queen Himiko in the third century

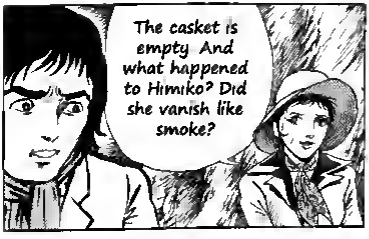
rumble rumble

rumble rumble

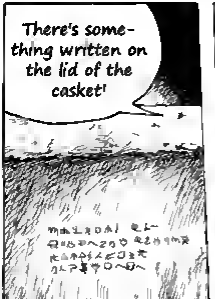




Hmm. This is just like the cave in Suwa. I've been inside Koka Saburo's cave before.
"When Himiko passed away, a great mound was raised..."
There are legends of giant serpents in Usa that resemble the tale of Yamata-no-Orochi in Izumo. They tell of ancient calamities...
It's like the underground province in Suwa. Something happened. Yamatai was destroyed, likely quite suddenly...
Around the end of the third century the Yamatai Kingdom vanished from historical records... Why was that!?
The god that Himiko worshiped was undoubtedly Susanoo. And Himiko...
There is another legend of a horse god with a horn named Ryuuku who lived in Mount Soba. What do these legends reveal...
"There lived an honored old blacksmith who was transformed into an eight-headed snake as a strange omen. If five men approached he would kill three. If ten approached he would kill five." (Collected Prophecies of Usa)


The casket is empty And what happened to Himiko? Did she vanish like smoke?

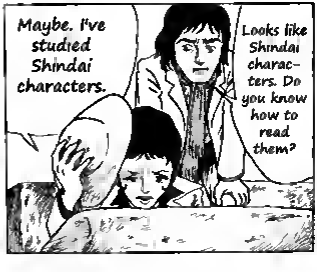
This looks like a seal It says "Friendly to Wei..."

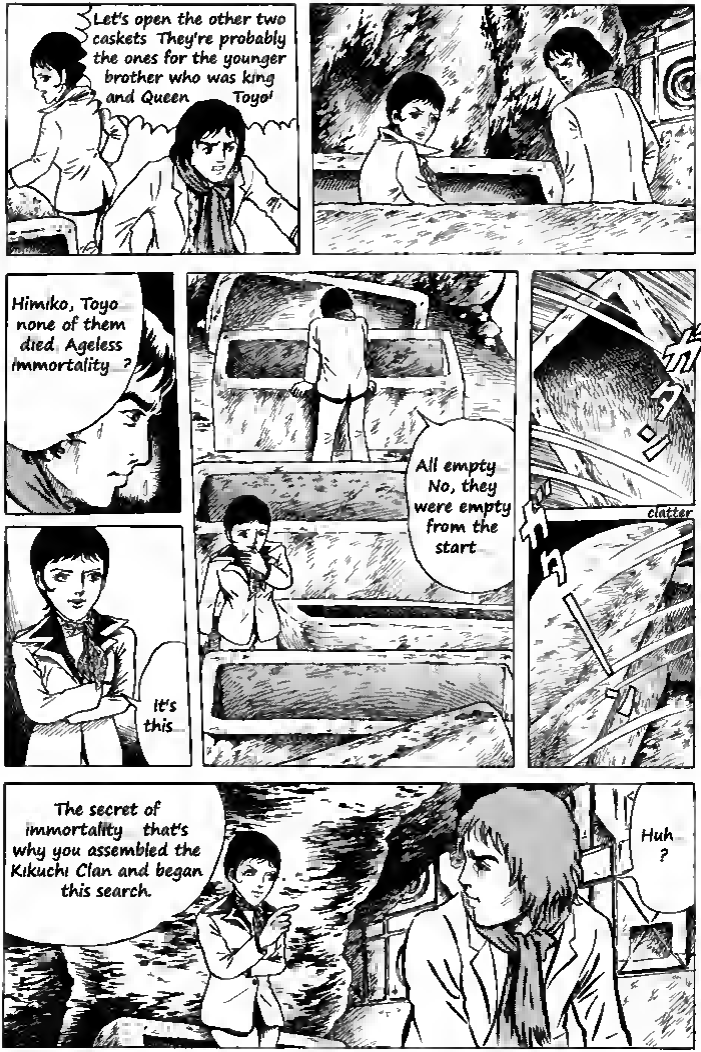

There's something written on the lid of the casket!

Hiko, Look here!
This is without doubt the seal the Himiko got from the Emperor of Wei in China. But half is broken off...?

"You shall be named Queen of Wa Friendly to Wei and shall bear this golden seal and purple sash."

"At Ohmimohi she received ageless immortal!"
"Queen Himiko took the seal and served the dark god..."

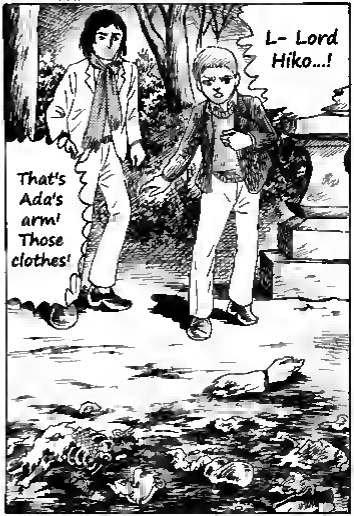

Maybe. I've studied Shindai characters.
Looks like Shindai characters. Do you know how to read them?


Let's open the other two caskets They're probably the ones for the younger brother who was king and Queen Toyo!
Himiko, Toyo none of them died Ageless immortality ?
All empty No, they were empty from the start
clatter
It's this
The secret of immortality that's why you assembled the Kikuchi Clan and began this search.
Huh ?

Since my family is the Ohka family, we have the first claim!
No! The legend you mentioned about the eight-headed serpent says that it was subdued by one Higi Ohka Therefore
You intend to keep if for yourself? Every member of the clan has the right to it
Don't be silly... I don't care about that
Lord Hikohhh
In exchange, I'll take this golden seal.
Real-ly!?
Ha ha ha... Fine. If we ever figure out that secret, I'll let you have all the rights to it.
Lord Hikohhh
I see!
Ah! Lord Hiko! We've found Takeshi!
What is it, Hayato!

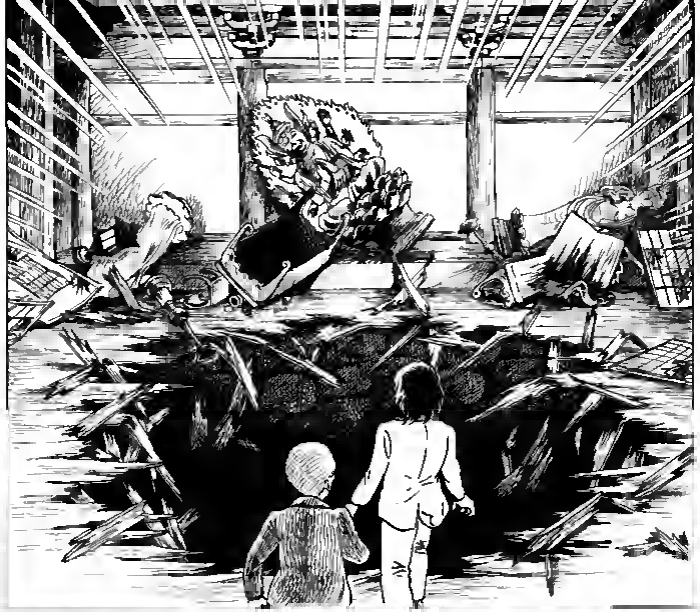
He's at a temple called Segaki-ji. Ada is standing guard.
I'm going to investigate a little further. Someone should stay here, right?
We need to get to him before nightfall! Hurry!
It's this way!
It has gotten rather dark. I guess we'll be there soon.
Here we are! I can see the temple.
No. Actually, I would like to look at the magai-butsu at the temple behind it...
Do you also have business at Segaki-ji?

roll

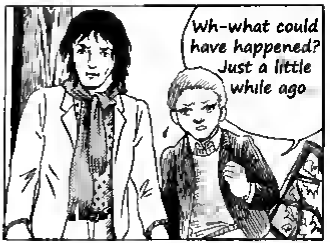


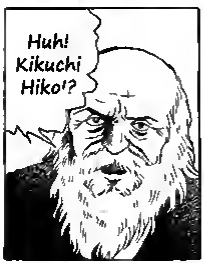
rattle rattle

rattle



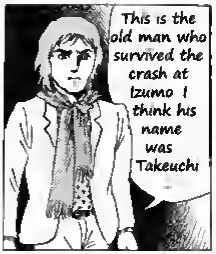
Yah! What could have caused this mess!?

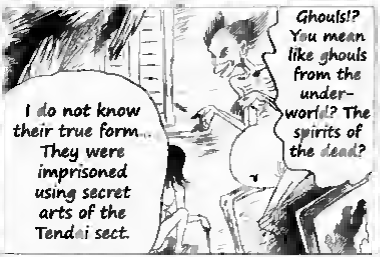

Wh-what could have happened? Just a little while ago

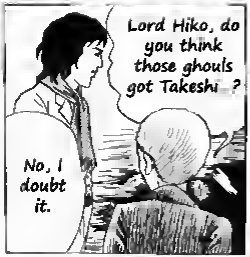

Huh! Kikuchi Hiko!?

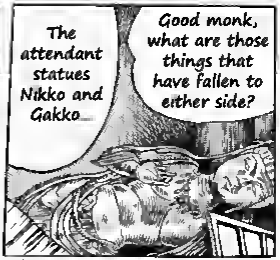
Uohhh.. !?

Is our inebri-ated brother in there?




I do not know their true form... They were imprisoned using secret arts of the Tendai sect.
Ghouls!? You mean like ghouls from the underworld? The spirits of the dead?

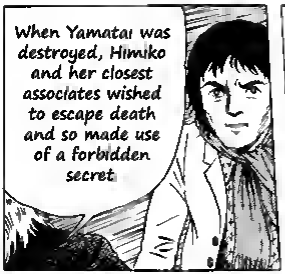




*Usually the Bodhisattvas Nikko and Gakko are the attendant statues of Yakushi Nyorai, the Healing Buddha

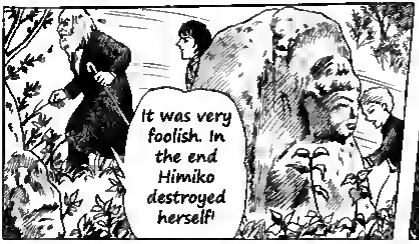
Indeed it is truly as the inscription said…
Right Now I remember you. You were the monk from Mount Hiei that found him
Is Takeshi the lad who was lying atop the iwakura?
What do you want to do Lord Hiko? Back to the grotto.?
Shh!
Holy sir, that is.
"Shin… has a ferocious lust for blood…"
Did you find it!? Please tell me you did not set foot in the spring!?
Spring?
What!? You know about the Yamatai Kingdom!?
Grotto? Wait, Hiko! Is that the Yamatai Kingdom…
ゴト…?
clank

It goes further back.
To live forever beautiful and young... and I shall do it!
Here are some more Shindai characters...
The secret of immortality!
"If you wish to receive ageless immortality... immerse your entire body in this spring..."


When Yamatai was destroyed, Himiko and her closest associates wished to escape death and so made use of a forbidden secret

Ageless immortality? Oh my yes, you'll have it! It is a horror!

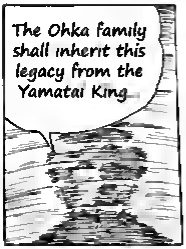
That spring... You must not touch that spring...

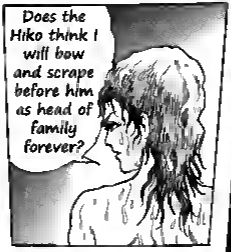

It was very foolish. In the end Himiko destroyed herself!

ピチ…
plunk

ピシャッ
plunk

ザブ…
splish

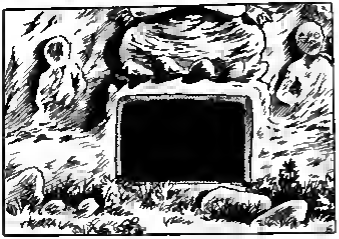

The Ohka family shall inherit this legacy from the Yamatai King


Does the Hiko think I will bow and scrape before him as head of family forever?

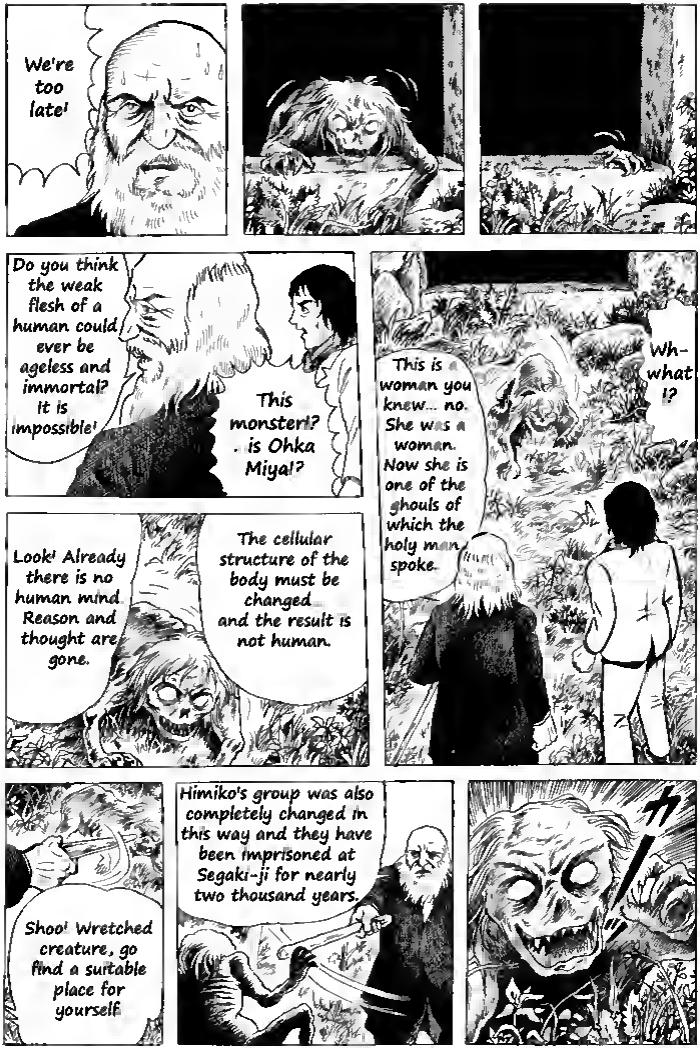
ガッ
ハッ
ガッ
splatter

Uhh..!?

GUAAAA...



Gueh. eh..eh..


We're too late!
Do you think the weak flesh of a human could ever be ageless and immortal? It is impossible!
This monster!? . is Ohka Miya!?
This is a woman you knew... no. She was a woman. Now she is one of the ghouls of which the holy man spoke.
Wh-what!?
Look! Already there is no human mind. Reason and thought are gone.
The cellular structure of the body must be changed... and the result is not human.
Shoo! Wretched creature, go find a suitable place for yourself.
Himiko's group was also completely changed in this way and they have been imprisoned at Segaki-ji for nearly two thousand years.
scream

Leave this grotto exactly as you found it. Make sure no one can see inside.
Wait! How is it you know so much of this matter!?
Do you see? You would do well not to stick your nose in so many things beyond your ken.
ガサッ
rustle
jerk
Who are you!? Why do you keep meddling with me!?
I told you to wait!
Fine! You may keep doing as you like,... but Brahman... the dark god Susanoo is not a pawn at your beck and call!
Uhh..
Listen to me, Kikuchi Hiko!

Damn
The only one who may approach Brahman is that young man.
As old as he is, yet so strong...
step step

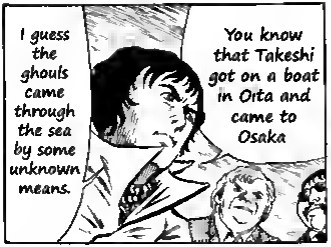
The Chapter of the Underworld

In the Osaka Prefecture town of Habikino there is an ancient imperial tomb called Shiratoriryo...

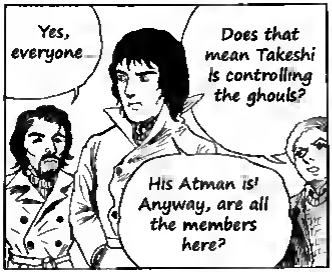
Early one morning at this tomb something very strange occurred...

The rounded end of the tomb was blasphemously desecrated and destroyed...

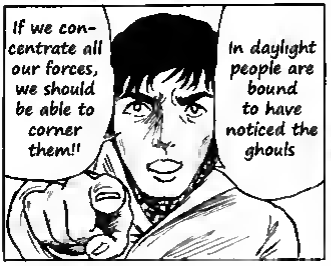
chatter *chatter* *chatter* *chatter*

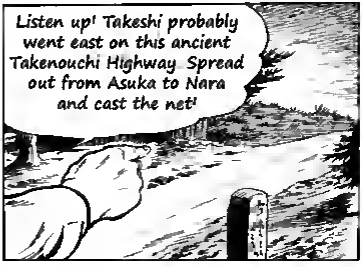

I guess the ghouls came through the sea by some unknown means.
You know that Takeshi got on a boat in Oita and came to Osaka

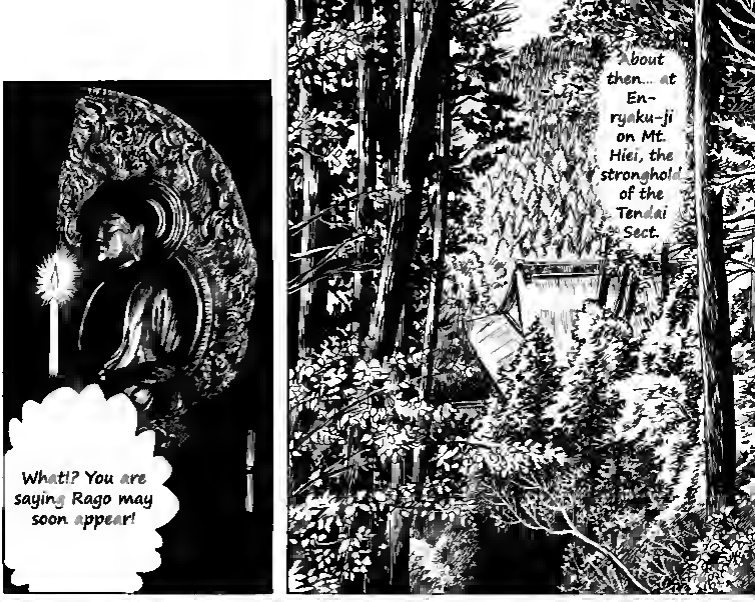
It's not normal. No human could have done it.
It must be Takeshi

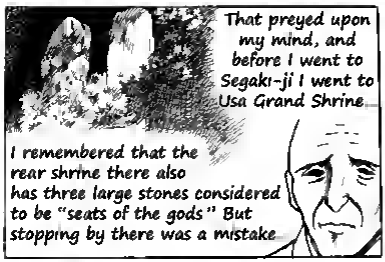

Yes, everyone
Does that mean Takeshi is controlling the ghouls?
His Atman is! Anyway, are all the members here?

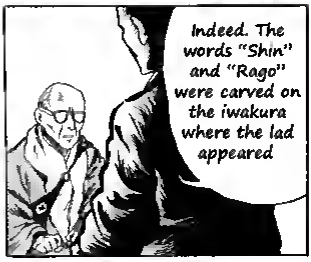
The Ohka, Aso, and Hino will be joining us eventually
Three from the Kikuchi, two from the Ogata, and four from the Hayato
Fine!

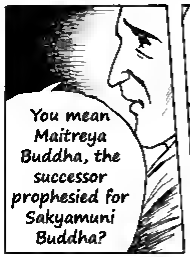

If we concentrate all our forces, we should be able to corner them!!
In daylight people are bound to have noticed the ghouls

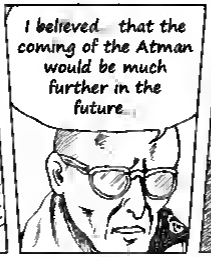

Listen up! Takeshi probably went east on this ancient Takenouchi Highway. Spread out from Asuka to Nara and cast the net!

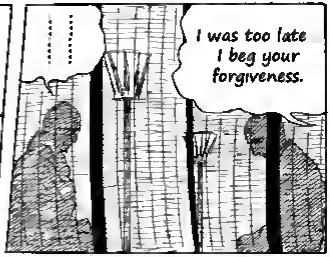

What!? You are saying Rago may soon appear!
About then... at En-ryaku-ji on Mt. Hiei, the stronghold of the Tendai Sect.

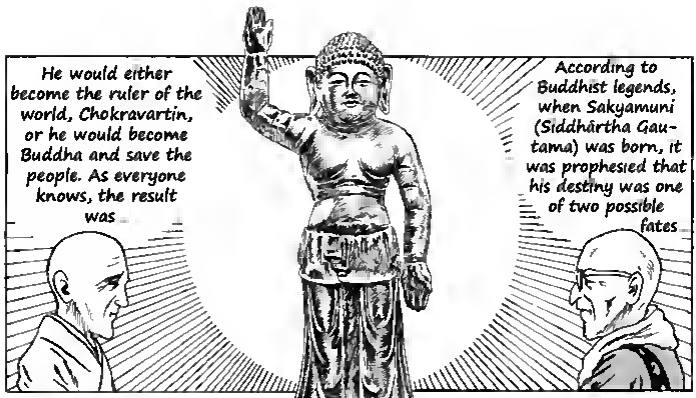

That preyed upon my mind, and before I went to Segaki-ji I went to Usa Grand Shrine
I remembered that the rear shrine there also has three large stones considered to be "seats of the gods" But stopping by there was a mistake


Indeed. The words "Shin" and "Rago" were carved on the iwakura where the lad appeared

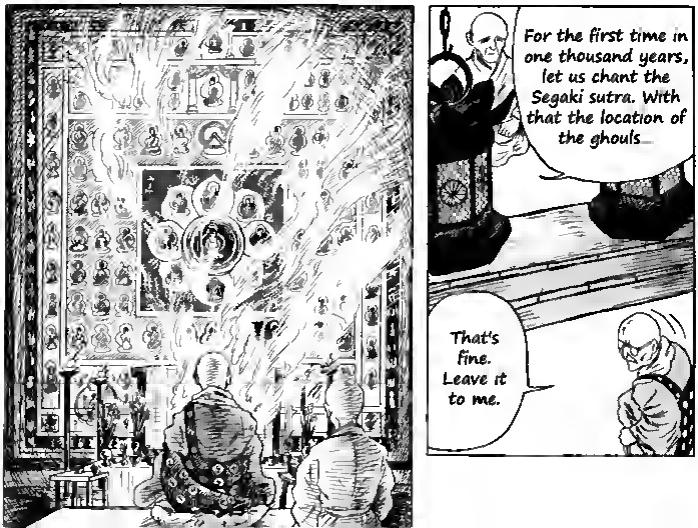

You mean Maitreya Buddha, the successor prophesied for Sakyamuni Buddha?


I believed that the coming of the Atman would be much further in the future

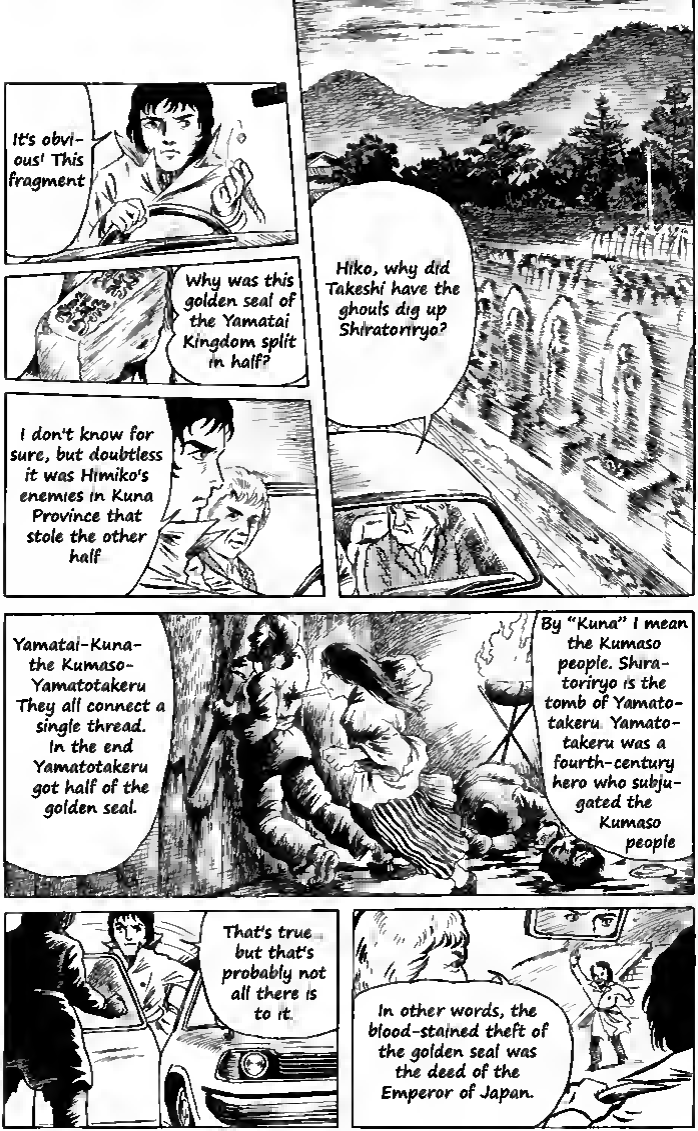

I was too late I beg your forgiveness.


According to Buddhist legends, when Sakyamuni (Siddhârtha Gautama) was born, it was prophesied that his destiny was one of two possible fates...
He would either become the ruler of the world, Chokravartin, or he would become Buddha and save the people. As everyone knows, the result was...

It is fine if the lad chooses the way of Buddha. Were he to choose the way of Chakravartin...
But first we must exorcize the ghouls. I brought the Bato Kannon statue here.

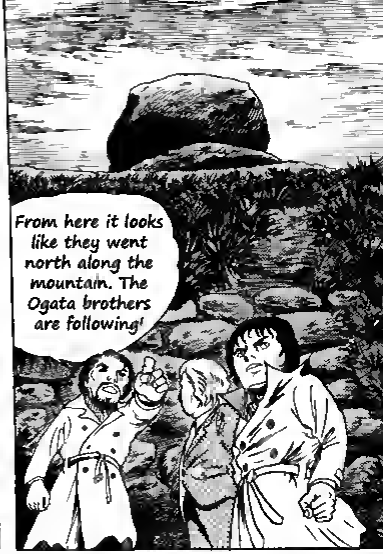

For the first time in one thousand years, let us chant the Segaki sutra. With that the location of the ghouls...
That's fine. Leave it to me.

—Ishibutai Kofun, Asuka...
What is it, Hayato? Have you found something?
They look rather fresh. Let's split up and search!
Footprints. But from neither man nor beast...
Ho!
It's Takeuchi. Why is he here ?

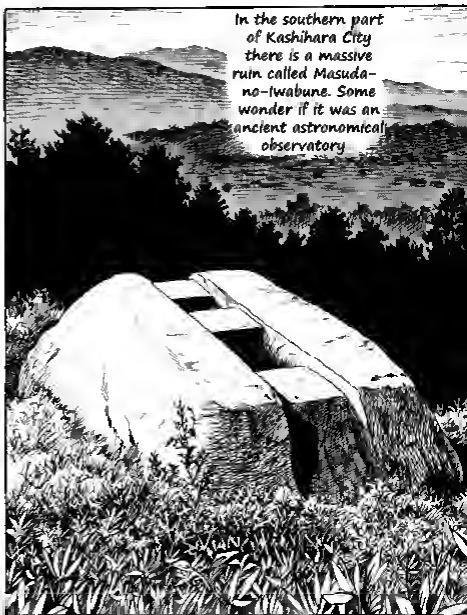

It's obvious! This fragment
Why was this golden seal of the Yamatai Kingdom split in half?
I don't know for sure, but doubtless it was Himiko's enemies in Kuna Province that stole the other half
Hiko, why did Takeshi have the ghouls dig up Shiratoriryo?
Yamatai-Kuna-the Kumaso-Yamatotakeru They all connect a single thread. In the end Yamatotakeru got half of the golden seal.
By "Kuna" I mean the Kumaso people. Shiratoriryo is the tomb of Yamatotakeru. Yamatotakeru was a fourth-century hero who subjugated the Kumaso people
That's true but that's probably not all there is to it.
In other words, the blood-stained theft of the golden seal was the deed of the Emperor of Japan.

You didn't see him? He just went to contact you.
And Haya to?
No, I haven't seen him.

The Hinos should go on around to Tenri City!
Let's split up and search from Mount Miwa We'll meet up again at Sakurai!


From here it looks like they went north along the mountain. The Ogata brothers are following!

?

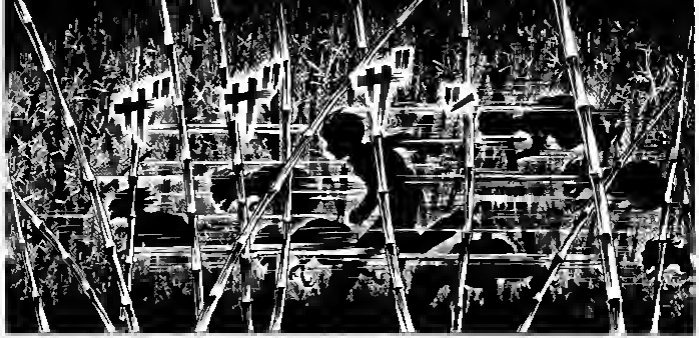

In the southern part of Kashihara City there is a massive ruin called Masuda-no-Iwabune. Some wonder if it was an ancient astronomical observatory

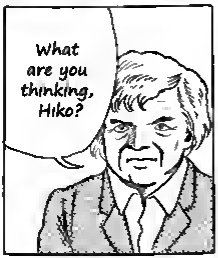
Why does this dodgy old guy know so many secrets? What could he have been doing at Ishibutai?
Part of the Iwabune opens! There's a cavity inside!
ゴクン……
roll
Right! Takeshi-uchi-no-Sukune!?
I believe one of the ancestors of the Soga Clan was…
Tak-enouchi? Takeuchi?
Ishibutai is the tomb of Soga-no-Umako… He was the one who built Takenouchi Highway.

On the ceiling are maps of constellations... So it really is an observatory built by Emperor Tenmu...
Soon this may well be needed again.
Fufu...
knock knock
Ancient astrologists and sorcerers stood on this pedestal and viewed the stars. Using astrology they created a calendar.
Ah...
up
?

That horse god is just like the one in Takehara Kofun. ah!
ガラン
rattle
ゴロン…
thunk roll thunk

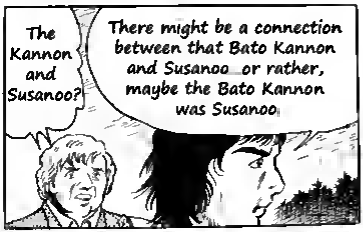
ガサッ
rustle
シーン
silence
Not over there. Come over here. This way
ガサ
rustle rustle
How do you like it? That mountainside is pretty in the early morning light

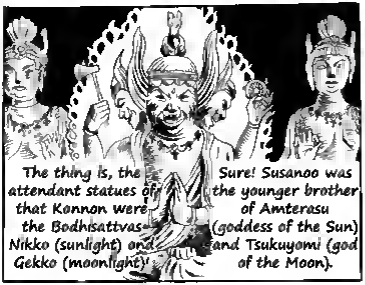

ザ ザ ザ
step step step


What are you thinking, Hiko?

They gave me the creeps. Let's go back to the hotel.
O-okay.

Not sure...?
Wh-whoa!? Was that dogs...?


The Kannon and Susanoo?
There might be a connection between that Bato Kannon and Susanoo... or rather, maybe the Bato Kannon was Susanoo.


The thing is, the attendant statues of that Kannon were the Bodhisattvas Nikko (sunlight) and Gekko (moonlight).
Sure! Susanoo was the younger brother of Amterasu (goddess of the Sun) and Tsukuyomi (god of the Moon).

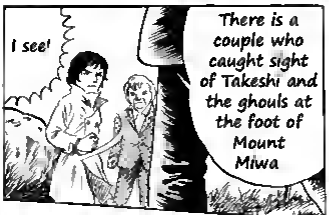
I keep thinking about that temple Segaki-ji in Kunisaki...

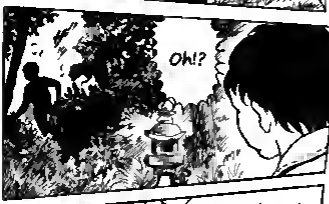
Amaterasu received the mandate to rule Takamagahara and Tsukuyomi the kingdom of Night. They are respectively the deification of the sun and moon.

According to the eighth century chronicle "Kojiki," after Izanagi escaped from the underworld he undertook a purification ritual. As part of the ritual he begat Amaterasu, Tsukuyomi, and Susanoo the "three precious gods."

Of old, Susanoo was considered as Storm God and god of snakes and other evil avatars, but his true form is a mystery.

Susanoo on the other hand behaved lawlessly in Takamagahara. He flayed a horse alive and threw its carcass into the room where Amaterasu was weaving. He brought darkness to the world and ultimately was exiled to the country of Ne.



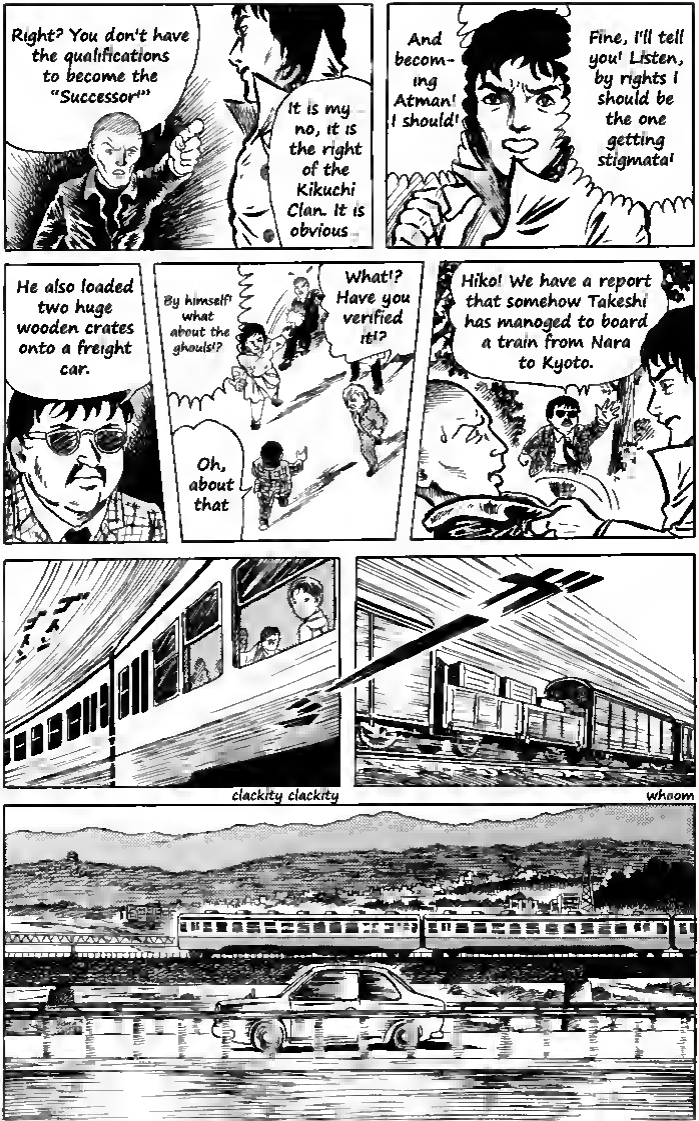


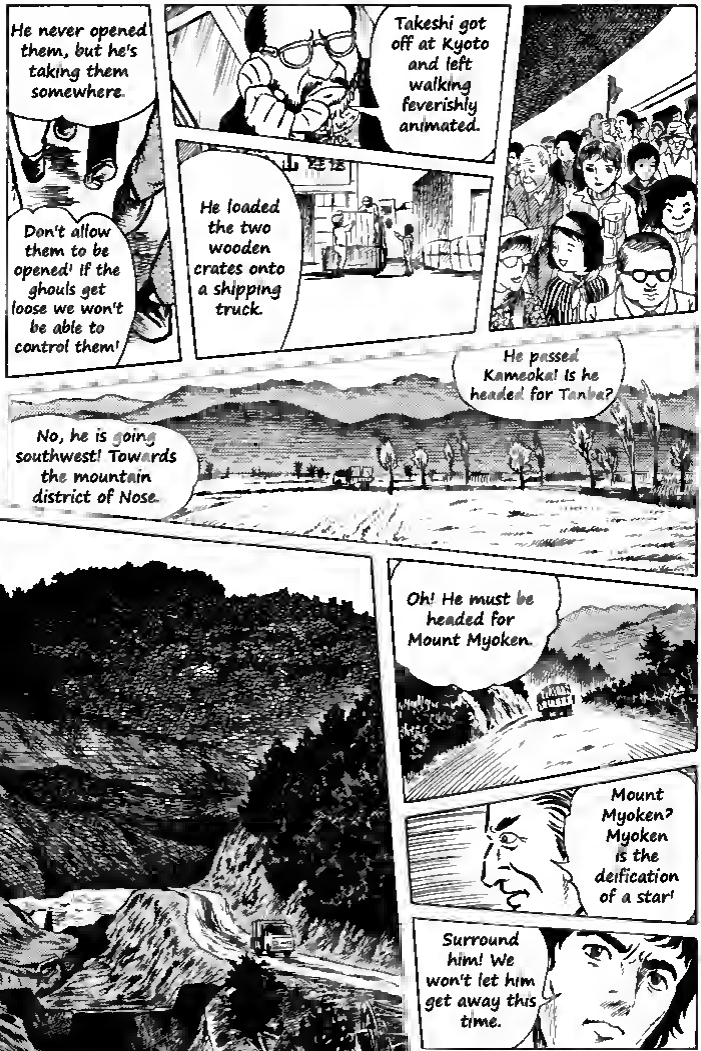
Grrr
gasp

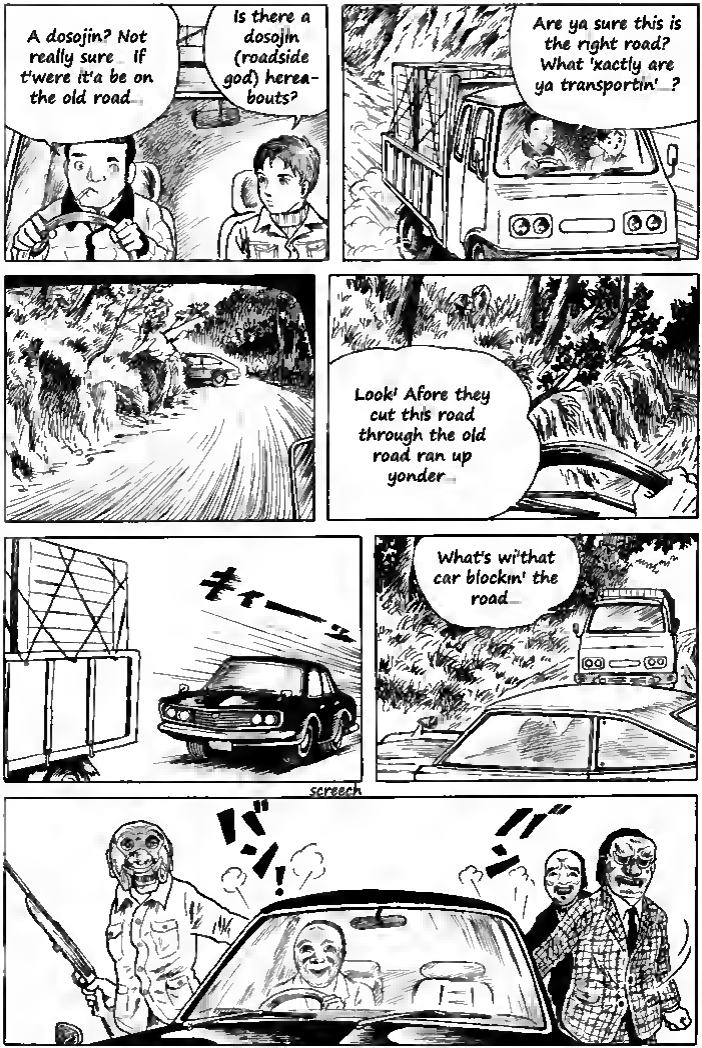
Rago!?
It resembles Rago, one of the Nine Luminaries listed in the astrological text, "Xiuyaojing."
It seems to be an image of Buddha used in a Mikkyo ritual
The statue of the Buddha reminded me. This scrap of paper you gave me...

C- come quickly...
Did you find them!? Is Takeshi there!?
Hold that thought, Aso!
Xiuyaojing is a sutra of astrology used in the Mikkyou...
I don't fully understand it, but he is like a star that portends omens of calamities... However, normally there are nine snakes above his head...

Ugghh
Uh.
Ugeh
Ogata! Where is Saburo!?
Not here
He disappeared near the ruins of Heijo Palace
Where's Takeshi?
Something awful had a messy feed, leaving only bones and some viscera strewn around
That's Saburo's shoe!
I would appreciate an explanation of why we're chasing the boy! Is he that much of a prize
Ogata!
How could he disappear! It's broad daylight and we're right here next to Nara City. Someone must have seen him!
Hiko

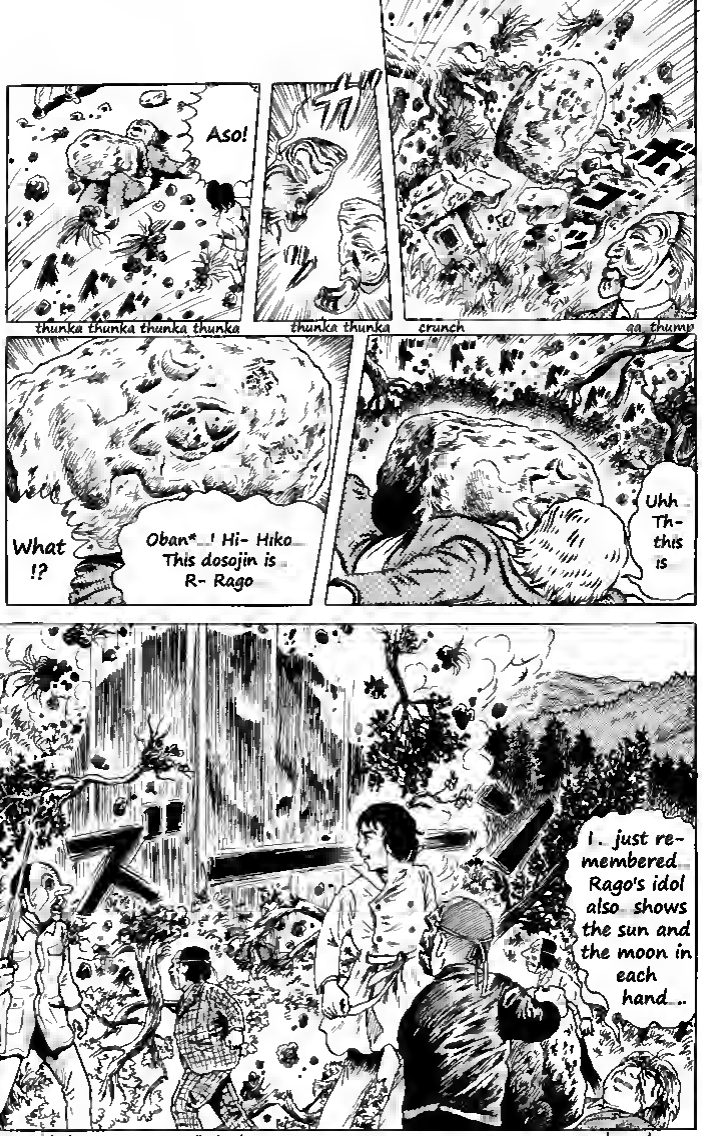

Right? You don't have the qualifications to become the "Successor"
It is my no, it is the right of the Kikuchi Clan. It is obvious
And becoming Atman! I should!
Fine, I'll tell you! Listen, by rights I should be the one getting stigmata!
He also loaded two huge wooden crates onto a freight car.
By himself? what about the ghouls!?
What!? Have you verified it!?
Oh, about that
Hiko! We have a report that somehow Takeshi has manoged to board a train from Nara to Kyoto.
clackity clackity
whoom


He never opened them, but he's taking them somewhere.
Don't allow them to be opened! If the ghouls get loose we won't be able to control them!
Takeshi got off at Kyoto and left walking feverishly animated.
He loaded the two wooden crates onto a shipping truck.
He passed Kameoka! Is he headed for Tanba?
No, he is going southwest! Towards the mountain district of Nose.
Oh! He must be headed for Mount Myoken.
Mount Myoken? Myoken is the deification of a star!
Surround him! We won't let him get away this time.


A dosojin? Not really sure... If t'were it'a be on the old road...
Is there a dosojin (roadside god) hereabouts?
Are ya sure this is the right road? What 'xactly are ya transportin'...?
Look! Afore they cut this road through the old road ran up yonder...
What's wi'that car blockin' the road...
screech
slam
slam

Wh-what's up...
smack
That's right! Do not touch the boxes. And anyway you have nothing to fear!
leap

Takeshi! What did you dig up at Shira-toriryo?
Kikuchi Hiko!
I'm guessing you have it on you. Let me have a look.
The two pieces are spontaneously joining! The seam disappeared!?
Oh!?
It fits with mine perfectly and says "Queen of Wa Friendly to Wei"
I was right!
ゴゴ
ゴゴゴ
ゴゴ
whirrrrrr


Aso!
thunka thunka thunka thunka
thunka thunka
crunch
gg thump
What !?
Oban*...! Hi- Hiko... This dosojin is... R- Rago
Uhh... Th- this is...
I. just re- membered... Rago's idol also shows the sun and the moon in each hand...
ker-wham

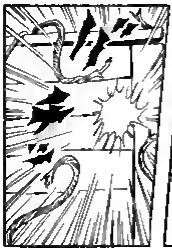
*It is said that Rago was called Oban when he descended to Earth

A m-mon-ster!
A horse! A stone horse!

Susanoo!

That's Susanoo!? That's Susanoo's idol!?

Don't be afraid. It's just a stone statue! It can't do anything!


snap

ガラ ガラ ガラ
So the golden seal is used to summon this idol...
rattle rattle rattle

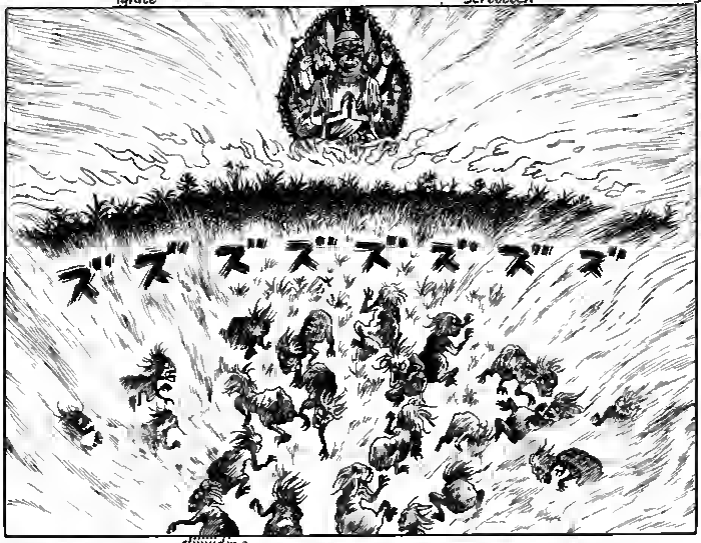
Waaa!!
wham
Damn!
ka-bang
bang bang

Uwaa!
Gyaa!
Shit!
kick
Pant pant pant pant
bam bam
Get away! No matter how much you shoot or stab them, they won't die. Get away!
Screech!
Ah!
ka bang
creeaak
catch
D- damn! Takeshi isn't here!
step step

ignite

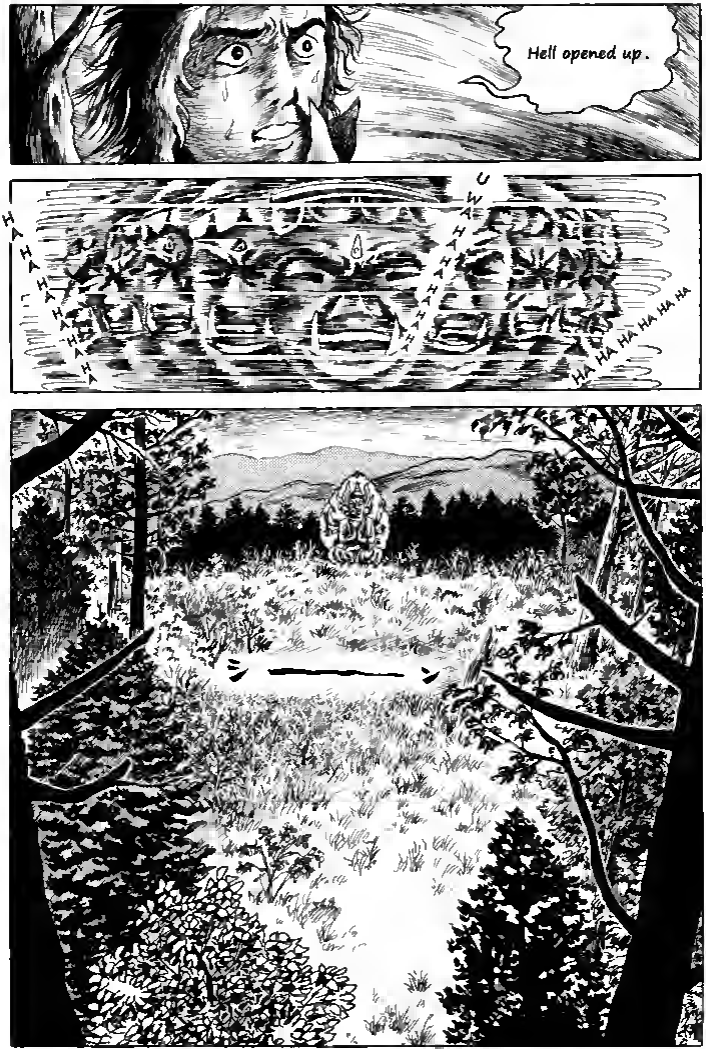
カン!!
KAN

Screeeech
Screech


ズ ズ ズ ズ ズ ズ ズ ズ
Slllllllding

HA HA HA HA HA WA

U WA HA HA HA HA HA HA
WA HA HA HA HA HA
ド ド ド

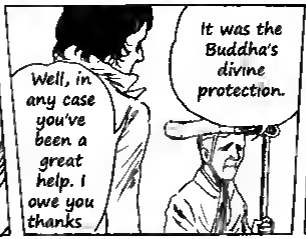

Hell opened up.
U
WA
HA
HA
H

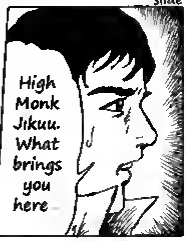
It's over... now we need to build a new Segaki-ji temple here...

ジャラン

slide

A great help It is as I expected I guess...?


Well, in any case you've been a great help. I owe you thanks
It was the Buddha's divine protection.

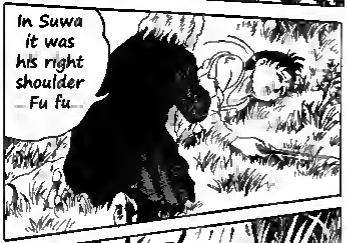

High Monk Jikuu. What brings you here...

I don't have time to listen to any sermonizing. Ogata! We're leaving!

As if you were being driven by the fires of the underworld
From the time we first met I have had the thought that you are pursuing a terrifying goal.

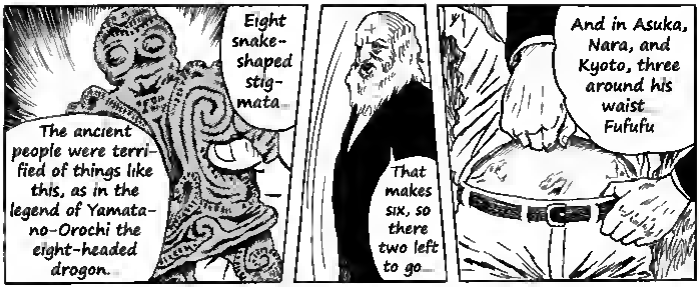
What!?

Goodness saving a man's soul is much harder than exorcizing demons

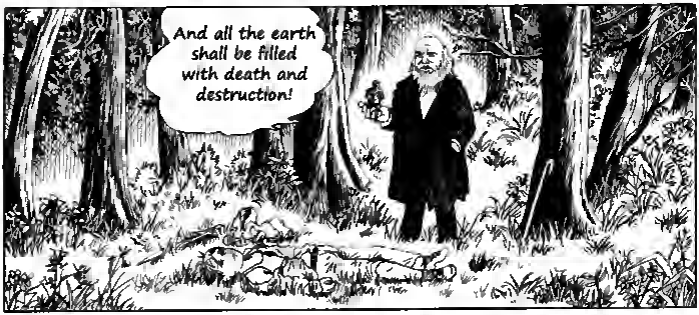

In Suwa it was his right shoulder Fu fu

In Izumo his right knee

In Yamatai it was his left ankle


Eight snake-shaped stigmata...
The ancient people were terrified of things like this, as in the legend of Yamata-no-Orochi the eight-headed drogon...
That makes six, so there two left to go...
And in Asuka, Nara, and Kyoto, three around his waist... Fufufu

The dark god Susanoo... not merely his statue but the god himself... shall descend from heaven and dance...
When Yamata-no-Orochi appears... or rather when a person with eight stigmata appears...


And all the earth shall be filled with death and destruction!

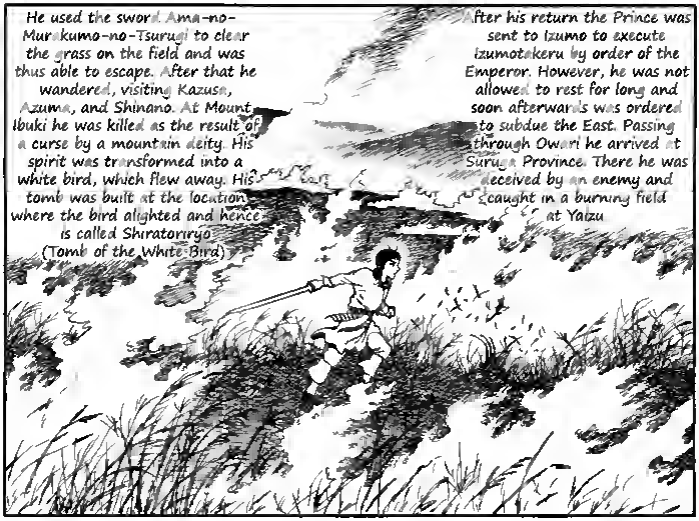
The Chapter of the Human

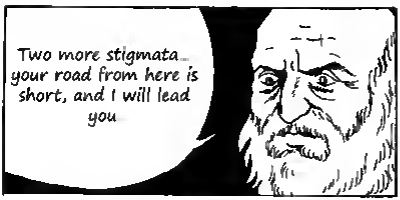
According to legends, Susanoo descended from heaven in Izumo When he slew the eight-headed serpent Yamato-no-Orochi he discovered within its tail a single sword.

Lord Susanoo dedicated the sword, Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi, to the sun goddess Amaterasu and left it in the care of Ise Grand Shrine. What this means is that the treasures of the ancient peoples of Izumo came into the hands of the Yamato Court when it conquered Izumo. The founder of the Ise Shrine, Yamotohime, gave the sword to Yamato-takeru.

Yamatohime gave the Prince clothing that made him appear as a young maiden. Alone in this disguise he infiltrated a banquet of the Kumaso and slaughtered the revelers with his sword. Because of that deed the Kumaso named him Yamatotakeru (The Hero of Yamato).

Yamatotakeru - known then as Prince Osu - was the third child of Emperor Keiko. He became estranged from his father the Emperor, and at the age of sixteen he was commanded to go to Kyushu to subjugate the Kumaso people.

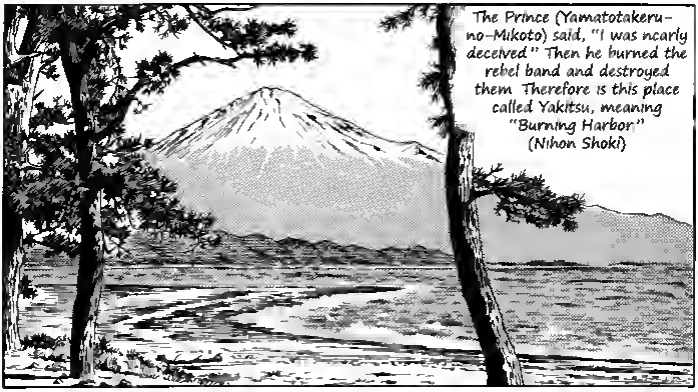

He used the sword Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi to clear the grass on the field and was thus able to escape. After that he wandered, visiting Kazusa, Azuma, and Shinano. At Mount Ibuki he was killed as the result of a curse by a mountain deity. His spirit was transformed into a white bird, which flew away. His tomb was built at the location where the bird alighted and hence is called Shiratoriryo (Tomb of the White-Bird).
After his return the Prince was sent to Izumo to execute Izumotakeru by order of the Emperor. However, he was not allowed to rest for long and soon afterwards was ordered to subdue the East. Passing through Owari he arrived at Suruga Province. There he was deceived by an enemy and caught in a burning field at Yaizu.


Two more stigmata... your road from here is short, and I will lead you

Do not worry. Unlike Kikuchi Hiko, my intentions are not wicked. It is my job to make sure of the outcome.
You

The hands of Susanoo and later Yamototakeru have passed down this sword. It is Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi, also known as Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi (the Grass-Cutter).

There are final preparations that must be made before you meet Brahman again. Our next holy destination is connected with Yamatotakeru Yaizu


The Prince (Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto) said, "I was nearly deceived." Then he burned the rebel band and destroyed them. Therefore is this place called Yakitsu, meaning "Burning Harbor." (Nihon Shoki)

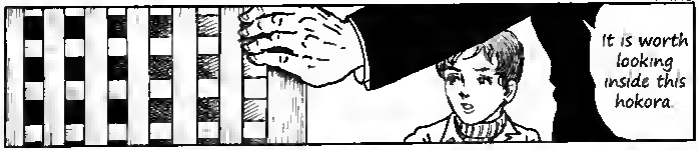
Yaizu? Hmm I see. Takeshi and Takeuchi...

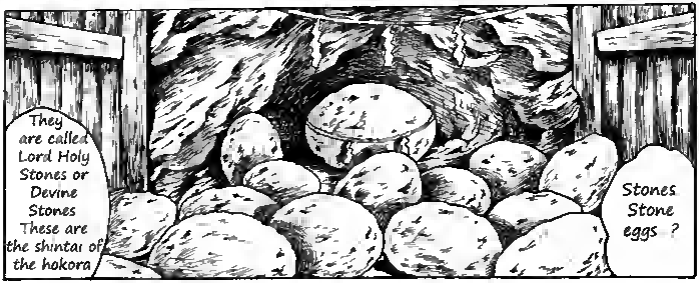
The Kikuchi Clan has been destroyed. All that's left is me and Ogata and you
Safe did you say?

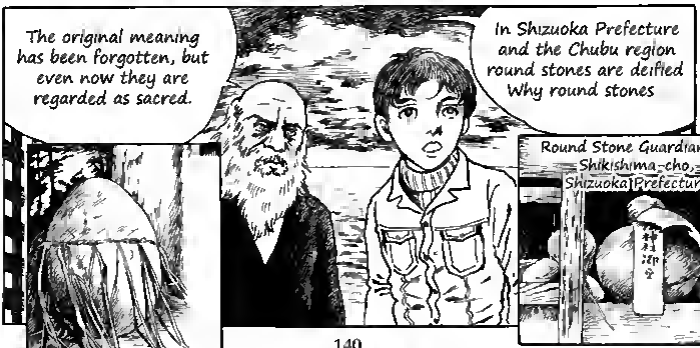
チン!
chink
ブー!
ring ring
Lord Hiko? I've been trying over and over to reach you
Hayato. You're safe? Where are you?

Yes sir!
I think I'll go ahead to Tokyo in hopes of ambushing him there You keep tailing him!
Will you come here?
Uhuh No, wait If we lose them again, when all is said and done Takeshi will probably return to Musashino
ガキャン
This time for sure we'll settle the matter!
slam
waves lapping
rumble rumble

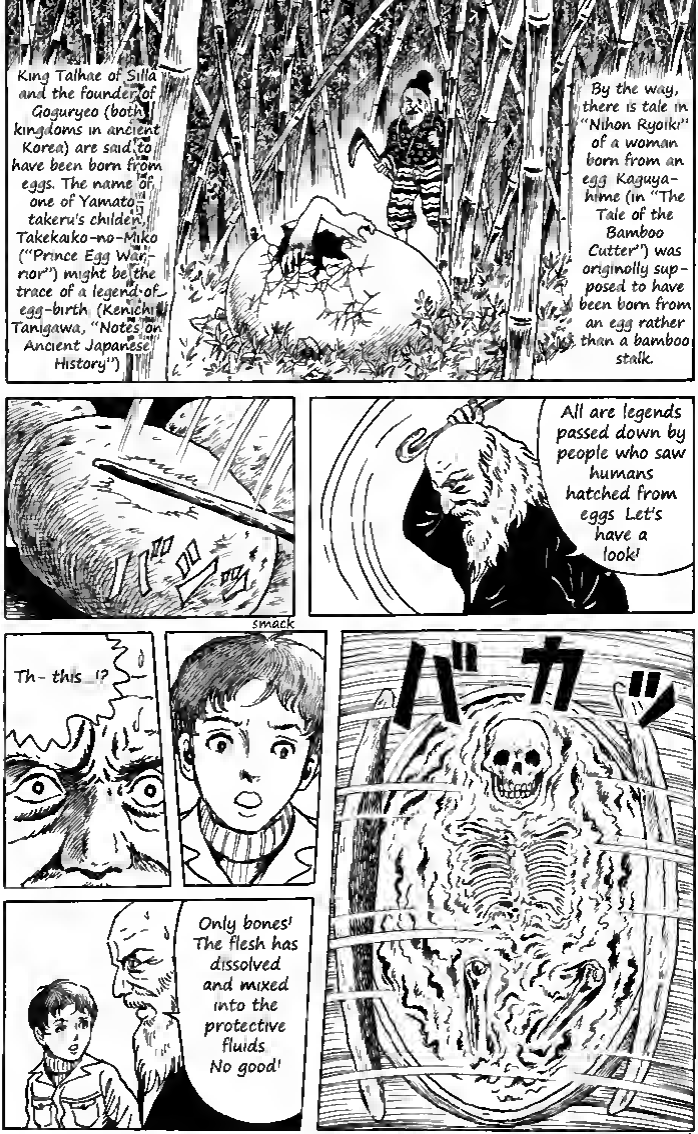
It is the belief that the gods came from across the sea and arrived on the beaches of places like Isu and Suruga.
It is called, "Yori-gami Shinko."
ザアアアア
raining
It has become rather gloomy. And it is too early for spring thunder-showers.
ゴロゴロ
rumble rumble
The arriving gods waited in open areas within the rocks, and so the rocks have been deified



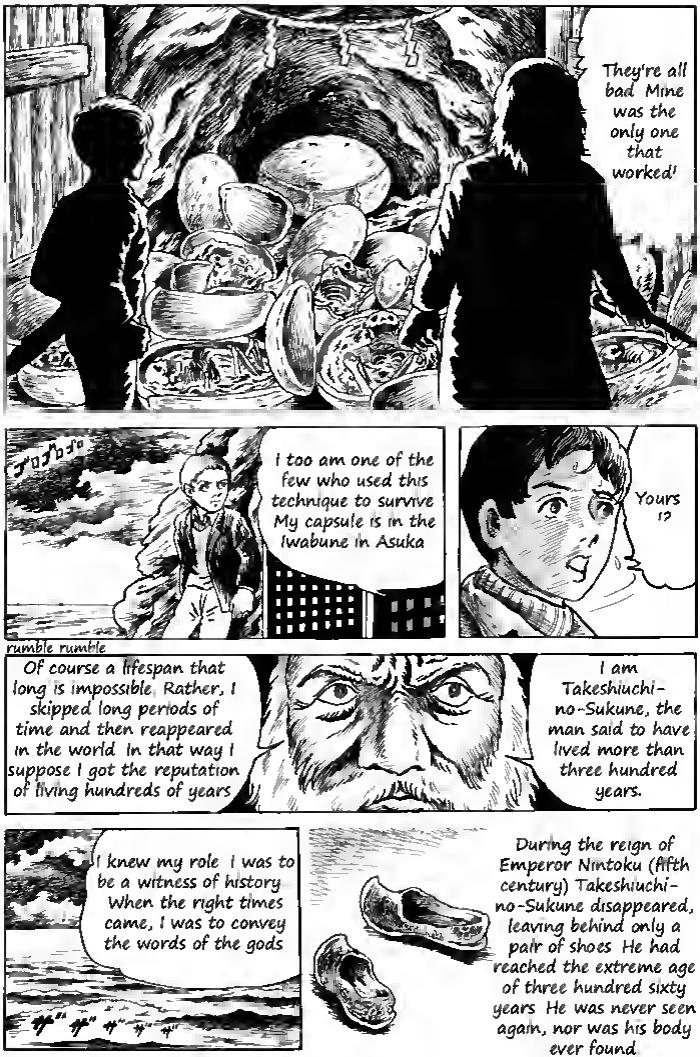


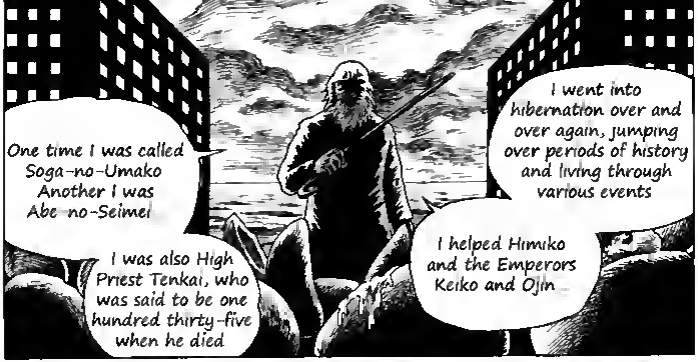

The original meaning has been forgotten, but even now they are regarded as sacred.
In Shizuoka Prefecture and the Chubu region round stones are deified Why round stones
Round Stone Guardians at Shikishima-cho, Shizuoka Prefecture

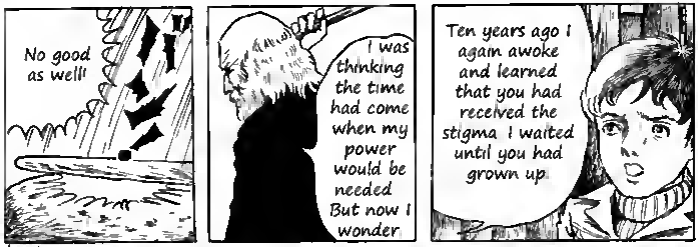
Thunder Stone, Shirahige Shrine, Shizuoka City


King Talhae of Silla and the founder of Goguryeo (both kingdoms in ancient Korea) are said to have been born from eggs. The name of one of Yamato takeru's childen, Takekaiko-no-Miko ("Prince Egg Warrior") might be the trace of a legend of egg-birth (Kenichi Tanigawa, "Notes on Ancient Japanese History")
By the way, there is tale in "Nihon Ryoiki" of a woman born from an egg. Kaguya-hime (in "The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter") was originally supposed to have been born from an egg rather than a bamboo stalk.
smack
All are legends passed down by people who saw humans hatched from eggs. Let's have a look!
Th- this...!?
Only bones! The flesh has dissolved and mixed into the protective fluids. No good!
バカッ
crash

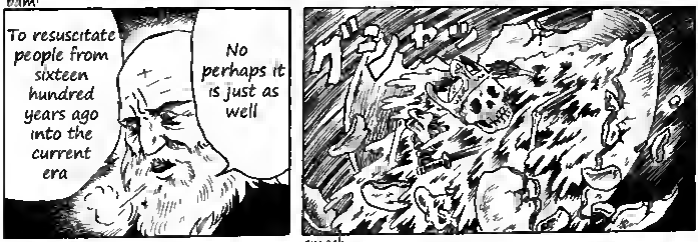
Do you recall the many stories from ancient Japan of hordes of people being slaughtered by terrifying bizarre phenomena? The end of the Jomon Period... Yuiman Province in Suwa... the destruction of Yamatai
What... are these?
They are like time capsules a form of artificial hibernation...
And another was these stone eggs...
In those times there were two ways to survive. One was Himiko's ageless immortality
But this is just terrible. all the bodies are completely dispersed. Could they have regulated the capsules incorrectly?
thump
Sixteen hundred years is just too far back...
crash
No one knows what this protective fluid is
thump
The technique is completely lost to the mists of time...
smack


They're all bad Mine was the only one that worked!
I too am one of the few who used this technique to survive My capsule is in the Iwabune in Asuka
ゴロゴロ
Yours !?
rumble rumble
Of course a lifespan that long is impossible. Rather, I skipped long periods of time and then reappeared in the world. In that way I suppose I got the reputation of living hundreds of years
I am Takeshiuchi-no-Sukune, the man said to have lived more than three hundred years.
I knew my role. I was to be a witness of history. When the right times came, I was to convey the words of the gods
During the reign of Emperor Nintoku (fifth century) Takeshiuchi-no-Sukune disappeared, leaving behind only a pair of shoes. He had reached the extreme age of three hundred sixty years. He was never seen again, nor was his body ever found.
—Original Source Lost


One time I was called Soga-no-Umako Another I was Abe no-Seimei
I was also High Priest Tenkai, who was said to be one hundred thirty-five when he died
I went into hibernation over and over again, jumping over periods of history and living through various events
I helped Himiko and the Emperors Keiko and Ojin

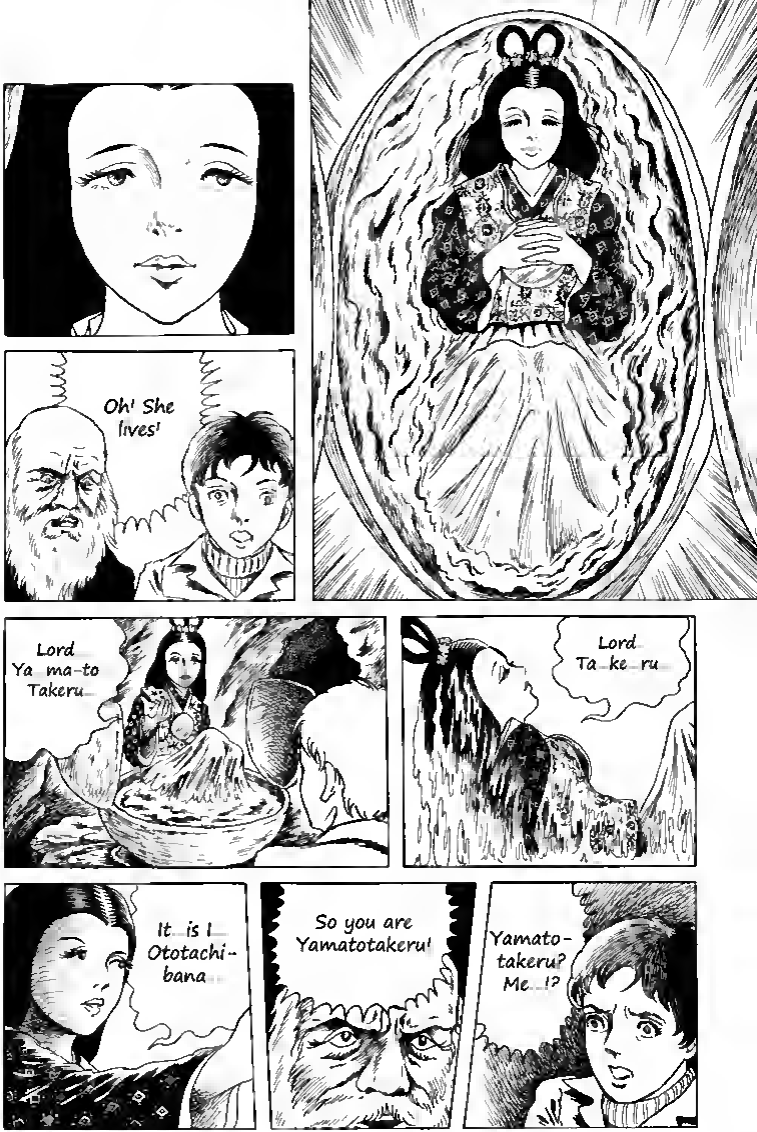

No good as well!
I was thinking the time had come when my power would be needed But now I wonder
Ten years ago I again awoke and learned that you had received the stigma I waited until you had grown up

bam!

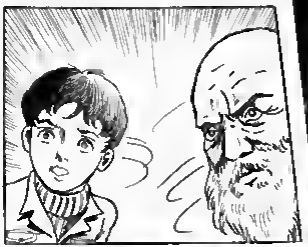

To resuscitate people from sixteen hundred years ago into the current era
No perhaps it is just as well
ガーン
smash

This one Hmm
There's an especially large capsule over there What is it?

The reason I brought you here was that I wanted you to meet her
This is the capsule of Yamatotakeru's queen, Princess Ototachibano
Who is it...?
If it's no good, I think it would be better not to open it
I'm going to try to open it.
WO
ぬぬぬぬぬ
rumble rumble
Oh!?
smack
smack

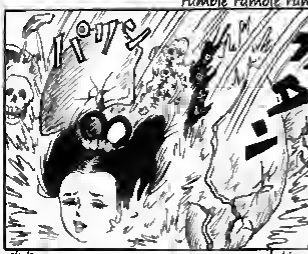

Oh! She lives!
Lord Ya ma-to Takeru
Lord Ta ke ru
It is I Ototachi-bana
So you are Yamatotakeru!
Yamato-takeru? Me!?

When I was serving Emperor Keiko There was a lad that was your spitting image.
ピカ！
flash!
He told me that after more than a thousand years he would return to Earth and that at that time we would meet again...
That lad was called Yamatotakeru. No wonder you carry the eight stigmata and the sword Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi!
Lord Takeru... Have you forgotten me ?
ker-crack
rumble rumble rumble
Both I and the Princess have awaited that day every since



rumble rumble rumble

slip

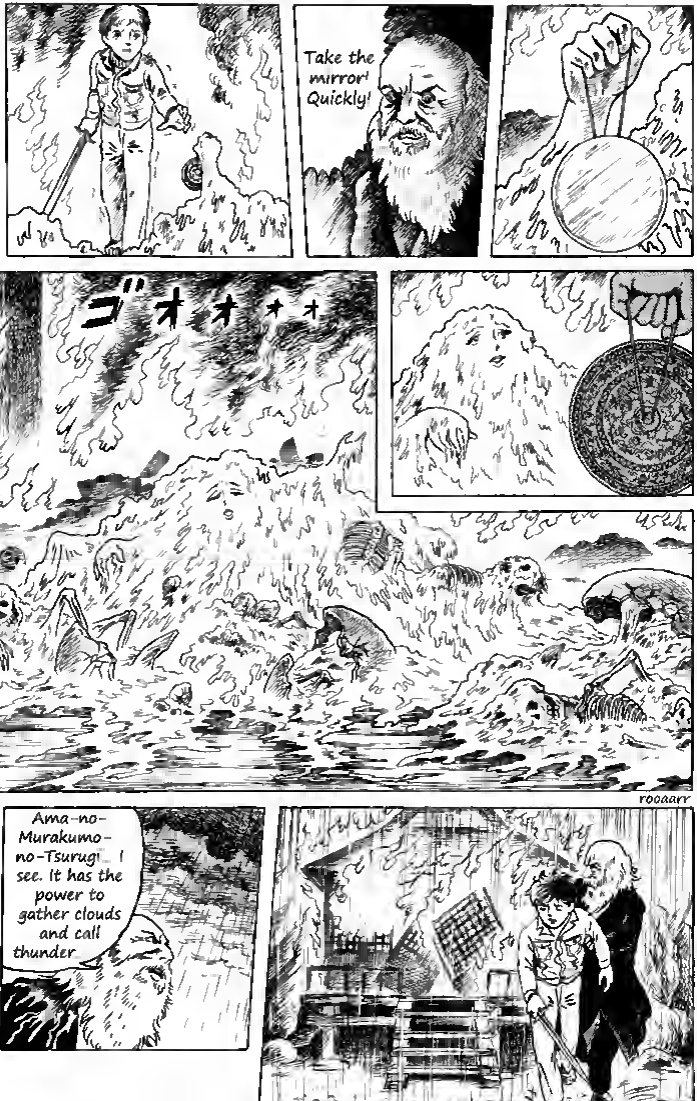

glub
clatter

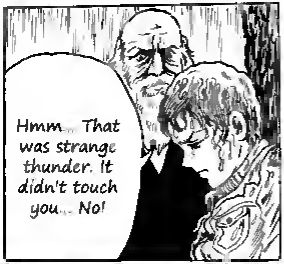
glub

Lord... Takeru!

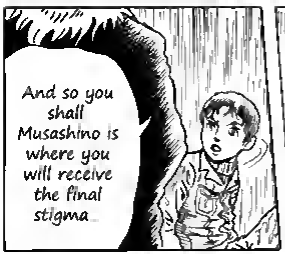
Lord Takeru !
Hers was not perfect either!
Do not approach!
ガラガラガラガラガラ
rumble rumble rumble
Lord Ta ke ru
カ
〃
flash

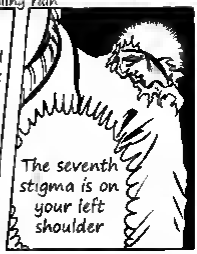
I said do not approach!
Lord Takeru... the mirror


Take the mirror! Quickly!
ゴオオオオ
roaaarr
Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi... I see. It has the power to gather clouds and call thunder

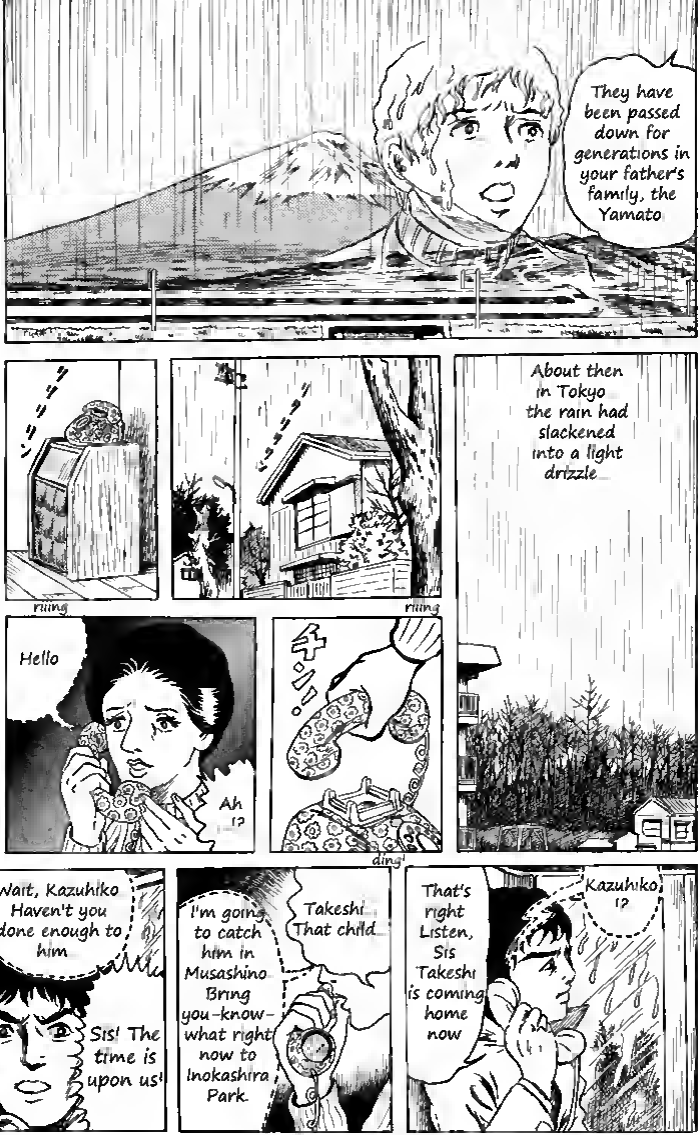


Falling rain

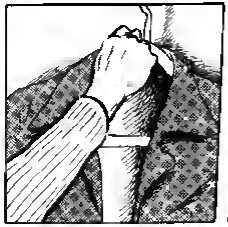




* The Three Sacred Treasures hidden Imperial Regalia of Japan


They have been passed down for generations in your father's family, the Yamato
About then in Tokyo the rain had slackened into a light drizzle
rrring
rrring
Hello
Ah !?
ding!
Wait, Kazuhiko Haven't you done enough to him
Sis! The time is upon us!
I'm going to catch him in Musashino Bring you-know-what right now to Inokashira Park
Takeshi That child
That's right Listen, Sis Takeshi is coming home now
Kazuhiko !?

お願いや
3分待ってモラーま

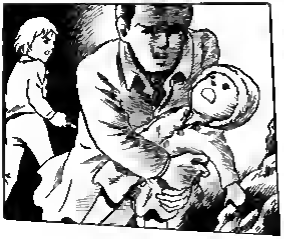


Who's there Takeshi ?

Mom...
カラ カラ...
Wh-who's there Kikuchi Hiko?
Jiro Ogata
Ogata... The Kikuchi Clan?
The Hiko is quite some-thing
.....?
His father went so far as to force his own daughter —this Hiko's older sister— to marry into his rival's family
From now on I do as I wish. That includes these curved jewels...
I'm me. I'm no longer the Hiko's flunky.

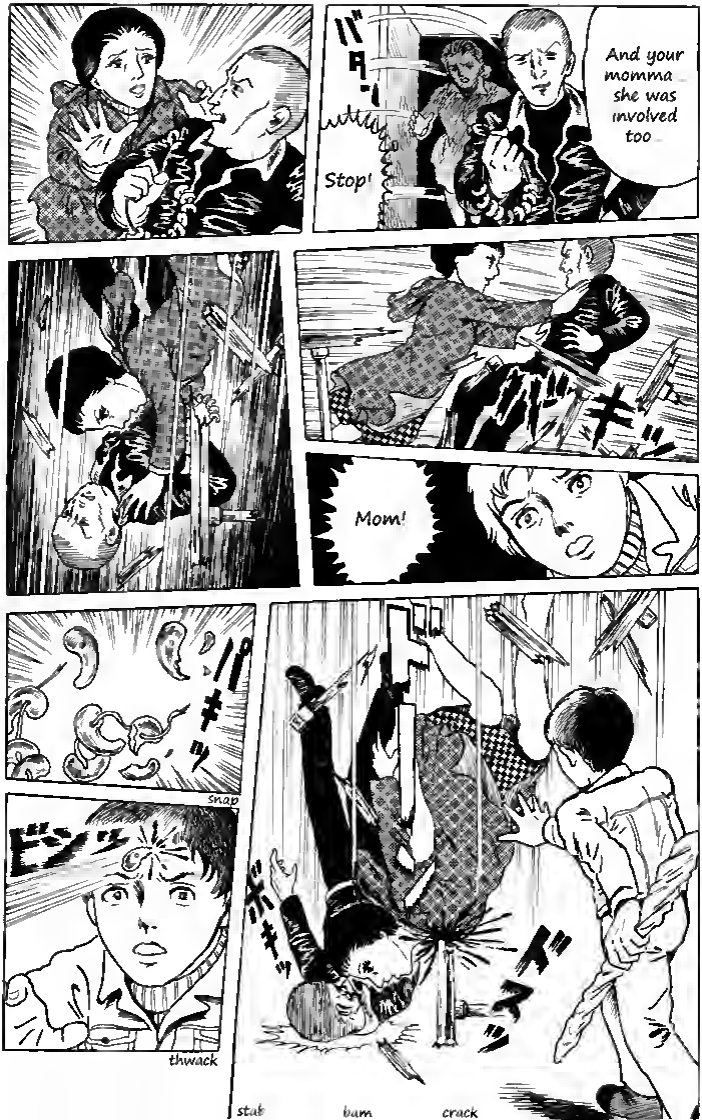
Uhuh You join together the blood of the Kikuchi with another family of ancient lineage Here, have a look
Ah ! That's right Mom's maiden name was Kikuchi ?
Ehh ?
You didn't know? Your momma and the Hiko are brother and sister
This... face...
武2歳
弟、一孝1歳
Takeshi age 2
Brother Kazuhiko age 14
The one on the right is Kikuchi Hiko!
flutter
That's right! The one who killed your father ten years ago was Kikuchi Hiko!
I just remembered! He... He's the one !
waa waa
rustle rustle rustle
waa waa waa

Long, long ago
There was a race of people in Japan that worshiped a wicked, dark god...
Later, due to the god's anger nearly all of them were wiped out. Only a handful managed to survive.
Soon a legend arose among the surviving clans that a Chosen One would appear...
Then, ten years ago... in the cave in Suwa your father discovered Takemi-nakata, who was being used by the dark god...
These families were the Yamato Clan of Musashi and the Kikuchi Clan of Kyushu...
The legend was particularly prominent among the Kikuchi
At that time Kazuhiko Kikuchi was fifteen years old.
As a youth his arrogance and ambition as the next head of the Kikuchi Clan was enough for two...
And because of that he considered himself to be the one that would become Atman.

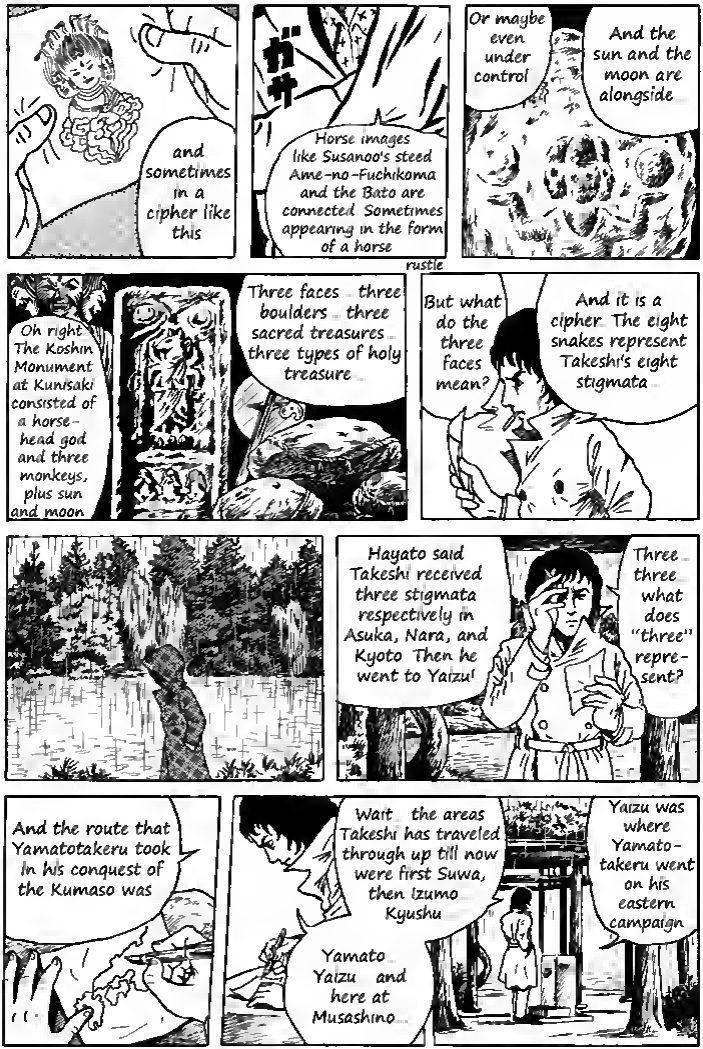


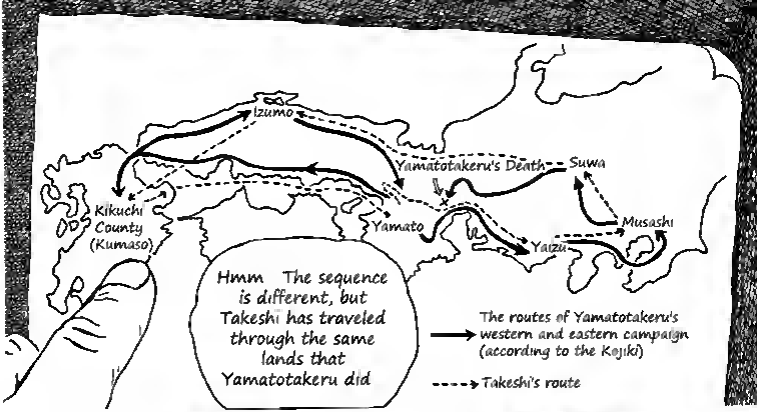
Even the young Kazuhiko knew there was no going back

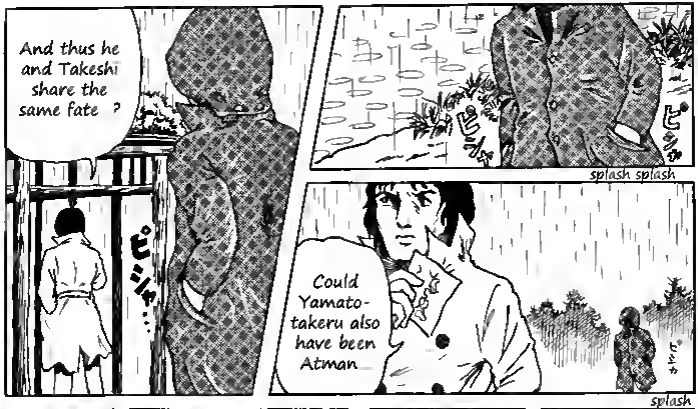
vsshh


バタン
Stop!
And your momma... she was involved too...
バッ
ギッ
Mom!
バキッ
snap
ドンッ
thwack
ボキッ
ドスッ
stab
bum
crack

Ki・ku・chi・Hi・ko!
Mom...
Brahman lend me your power. The power to be able to kill the Hiko!
カチッ
She's late...!
click
If Susanoo and Bato Kannon and Rago are different names for the same thing...

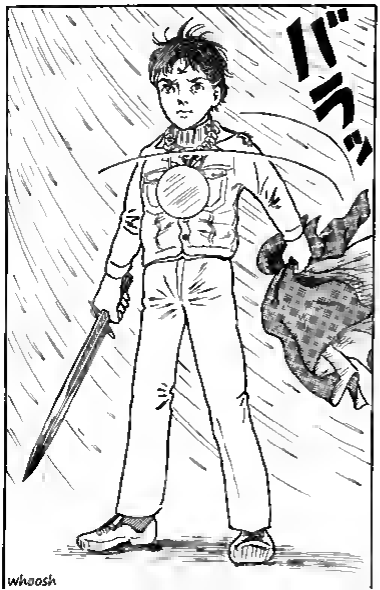

and sometimes in a cipher like this
ガサ
Horse images like Susanoo's steed Ame-no-Fuchikoma and the Bato are connected Sometimes appearing in the form of a horse
Or maybe even under control
And the sun and the moon are alongside
rustle
Oh right The Koshin Monument at Kunisaki consisted of a horse-head god and three monkeys, plus sun and moon
Three faces three boulders three sacred treasures three types of holy treasure
But what do the three faces mean?
And it is a cipher The eight snakes represent Takeshi's eight stigmata
Hayato said Takeshi received three stigmata respectively in Asuka, Nara, and Kyoto Then he went to Yaizu!
Three three what does "three" represent?
And the route that Yamatotakeru took in his conquest of the Kumaso was
Wait the areas Takeshi has traveled through up till now were first Suwa, then Izumo Kyushu
Yamato Yaizu and here at Musashino
Yaizu was where Yamato-takeru went on his eastern campaign


Izumo
Yamatotakeru's Death
Suwa
Kikuchi County (Kumaso)
Yamato
Musashi
Yazu
Hmm The sequence is different, but Takeshi has traveled through the same lands that Yamatotakeru did
The routes of Yamatotakeru's western and eastern campaign (according to the Kojiki)
Takeshi's route

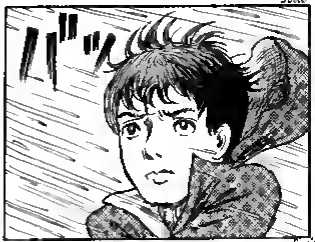

And thus he and Takeshi share the same fate ?
ピシャ…
ピシャ
splash splash
Could Yamato-takeru also have been Atman
splash

Sis?
Kikuchi Hiko!

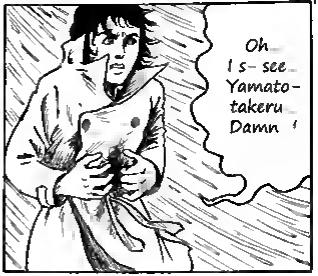
stab

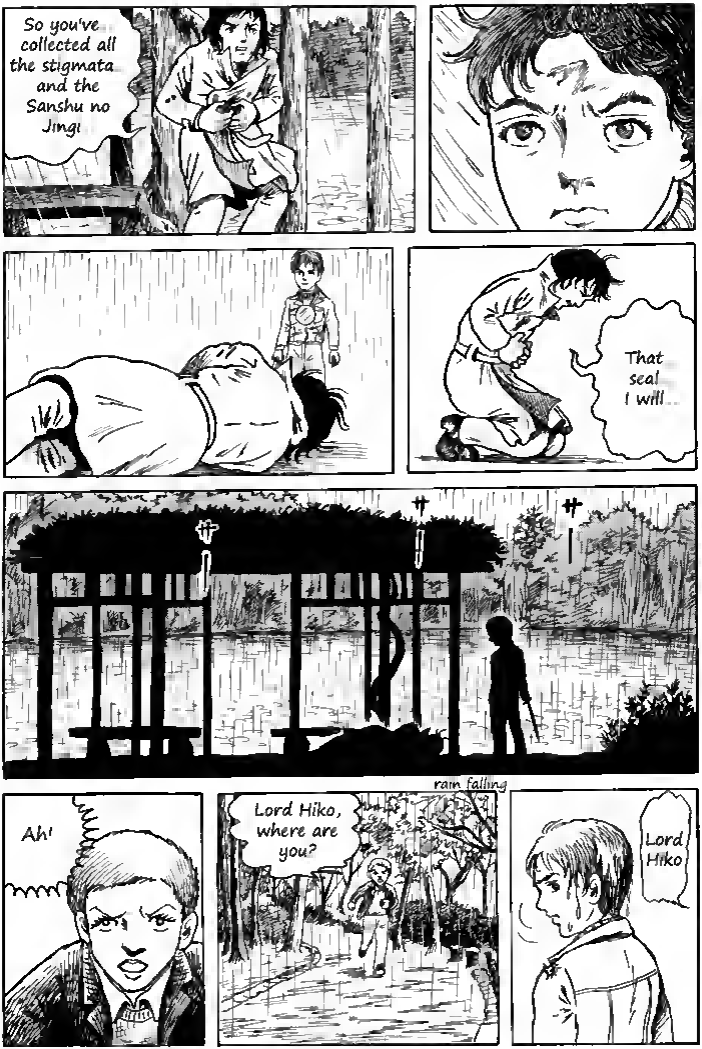


whoosh



twirl



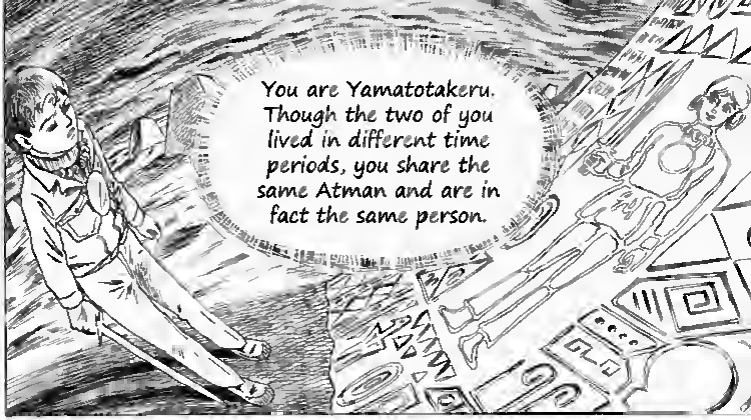

So you've collected all the stigmata and the Sanshu no Jingi
That seal I will...
rain falling
Ah!
Lord Hiko, where are you?
Lord Hiko

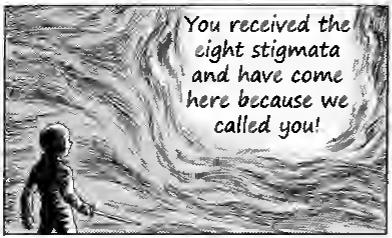
Takeshi d-
disappeared
?
Ahh !?
Lo Lord
Hiko !

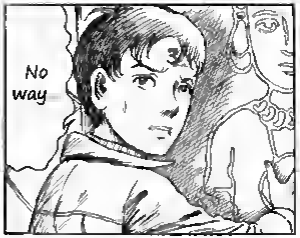
The Chapter of Heaven

BRAHMAN
BRAHMAN
BRAHMAN
BRAHMAN
I have come
I have come
I have come
I want to know my destiny
destiny
destiny
destiny

Welcome, Yamatotakeru
I am not Yamato-takeru!


You are Yamatotakeru. Though the two of you lived in different time periods, you share the same Atman and are in fact the same person.


You received the eight stigmata and have come here because we called you!

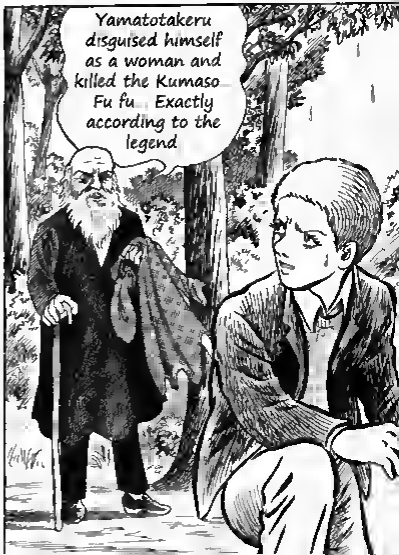

No way

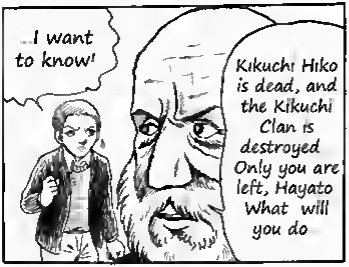
Come! Now you shall meet Susanoo and all secrets shall be revealed!

Look! There is Susanoo who has given you power!
That... It isn't possible... that's !?

Lord Hiko...
Lord...

N- no good... He's dead...


Yamatotakeru disguised himself as a woman and killed the Kumaso... Fu fu... Exactly according to the legend


...I want to know!
Kikuchi Hiko is dead, and the Kikuchi Clan is destroyed Only you are left, Hayato What will you do

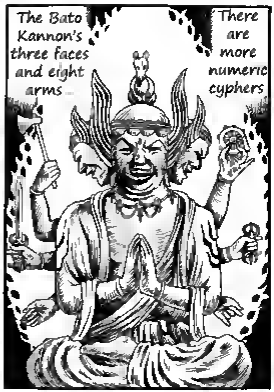
What is Atman... and Susanoo? Do you know? Where did Takeshi go!?
At least tell me... what Lord Hiko, Ogata, and Ohka were seeking that they would throw away their lives for it!
"Shin has a ferocious lust for blood. Rago invites disaster." All secrets are contained within the words of the Xfuyaojing!
Fine, I'll tell you
These fit perfectly on a map!
The stigmata that Takeshi received were as follows... at Musahino on his head, at Suwa on his right shoulder, at Yaizu on his left shoulder, at Kyoto, Nara and Asuka across his waist, at Izumo on his right knee, and finally at Kunisaki on his left ankle...
If you connect the locations with lines, doesn't it remind you of something? Fu fu fu... Do you understand?

Look! Do they not resemble the constellation? "Shin" was the word used in ancient times for the three stars in Orion's belt.

The ancient Yamato Empire had three capitals: Fujiwara-kyo (Asuka), Heijo-kyo (Nara), and Heian-kyo (Kyoto). These were patterned after the three stars in Orion!

The Bato Kannon's three faces and eight arms...

There are more numeric cyphers...



The three-comma design used by many shrines also represents three stars.

And it is no coincidence that there were three boulders near Takehara Kofun. It is said there are also three boulders in the small shrine at Usa Grand Shrine.

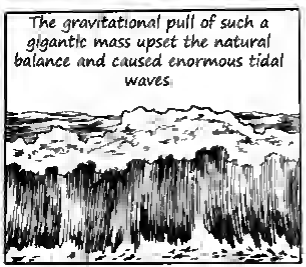
There is a ceremony to venerate these stars called Hoshiku. It is said that the food items offered to Shin in this ceremony represent blood.

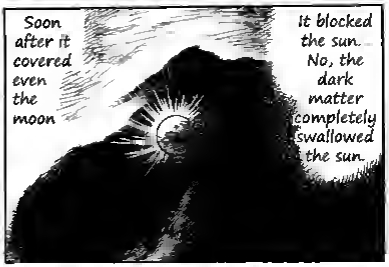
The Xiuyaojing is an astrological text used in the Mikkyou. It originated in India. Kukai, Ennin, and Enchin brought to Japan the Chinese system of dividing all constellations into "Twenty-Eight Mansions." Eventually Shinshuku (Orion) came to be considered as being wicked and having a ferocious temperament.

And born together with them was Susa-noo, so he must also be some kind of celestial phenom-enon, right?
According to the leg-ends, after Orion, Amaterasu (the sun) and Tsukuyomi (the moon) were born
The "Kojiki" relates the story of Izanagi who gave birth to the three shining gods, Sokotsutsunoo, Nakatsutsunoo, and Uwatsutsunoo These are said to be the three stars in Orion. (Iwanami Bunko, "Kojiki" Annotated)
In the mountains near Kyoto a statue of Susanoo appeared One of the stars in Orion's belt is Alnitak, and right near that is
The famous "Horsehead Nebula!"
But one theory is that it is a dark star. Obscuring the light from sun and moon, normally it is invisible. But when it appears it is a baleful star that brings calamity (Mitsukuni Yoshida, "Star Religions")
羅睺星
Rago Star
1
As for Rago, the Xiuyaojing lists it among the Nine Luminories Its true form is unknown There is no clear explanation.

The horse god at Takehara Kofun.
It was this...? Everything was this!?
The Spotted Steed of Heaven...
The horse god Ayuuku from the Usa legend... Chakravartin's mount!
The Bato-Kannon at Kunisaki...
The statue of Susanoo near Kyoto.
Exactly! Look! Because you got close it suddenly went into action. This dark nebula is alive!

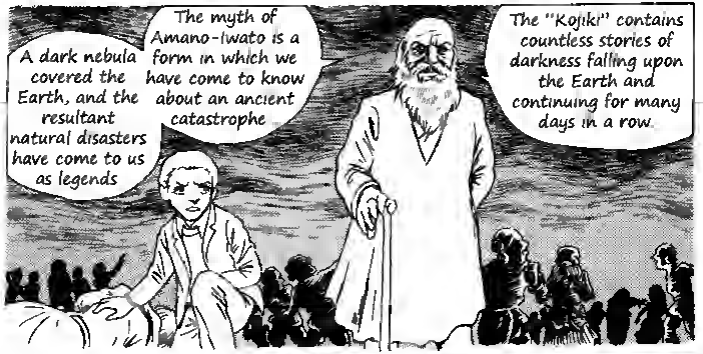
More than two thousand years ago the dark nebula was quite near the Earth. What do you think happened?
A-alive...?


The gravitational pull of such a gigantic mass upset the natural balance and caused enormous tidal waves.


Soon after it covered even the moon
It blocked the sun. No, the dark matter completely swallowed the sun.

In ancient times it approached repeatedly in a cyclic pattern. Every single time it came it brought with it calamity and destruction. Many animals and people died.
In the midst of darkness and cold on many days there were immense thunder storms.

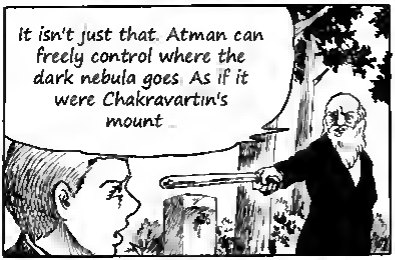
Finally, he tossed the flayed skin of the heavenly steed Ame-no-Fuchikoma into the weaving room of Amaterasu (The horse was Susanoo himself) As a result, Amaterasu (the sun) secluded herself in the cave Amano-Iwato
Susanoo brought draught to Aoyama, shook the earth, then rose into heaven He invaded Takama-ga-hara, laid waste to the the rice fields, and destroyed houses He reached the limit of lawlessness (These were called "The Heavenly Crimes" and represent the destruction of universal order)

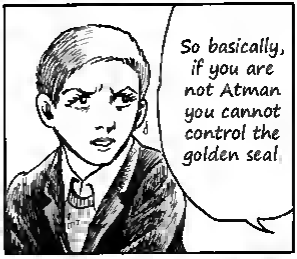

A dark nebula covered the Earth, and the resultant natural disasters have come to us as legends
The myth of Amano-Iwato is a form in which we have come to know about an ancient catastrophe
The "Kojiki" contains countless stories of darkness falling upon the Earth and continuing for many days in a row

Remember the slate excavated at the Togariishi site in Suwa? It shows the sun crossed out with an "X" seal That also is an expression of the abnormal phenomena

The ancient Jomon peoples of Suwa Basin were nearly wiped out
Because one of the cycles of abnormality was particularly bad....

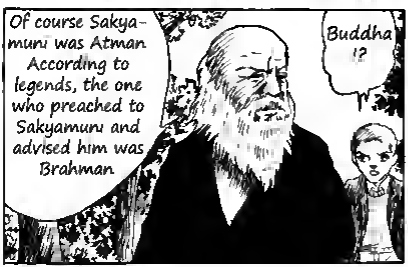
This only served to enrage the dark god and invited the devastation of the Yamatai Kingdom
Queen Himiko of the Yamatai Kingdom attempted to use the magical powers of the golden seal to control Susanoo

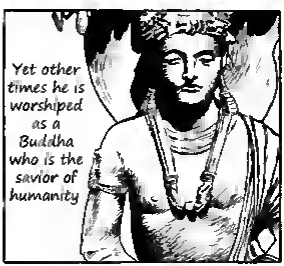

It isn't just that. Atman can freely control where the dark nebula goes. As if it were Chakravartin's mount

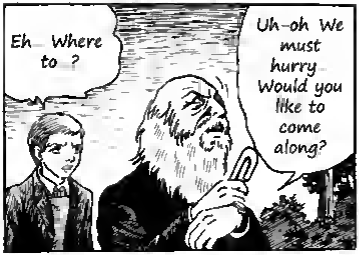

So basically, if you are not Atman you cannot control the golden seal

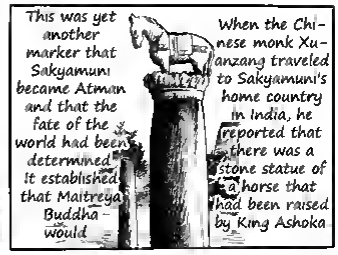
Other times he is revered as a mounted hero, like Chakravartin riding his holy steed

At times he becomes angry and appears as a monster like Yamata-no-Orochi
For this purpose Atman has eight stigmata in the form of snakes.


Of course Sakyamuni was Atman. According to legends, the one who preached to Sakyamuni and advised him was Brahman
Buddha !?


Yet other times he is worshiped as a Buddha who is the savior of humanity


Eh... Where to ?
Uh-oh We must hurry... Would you like to come along?

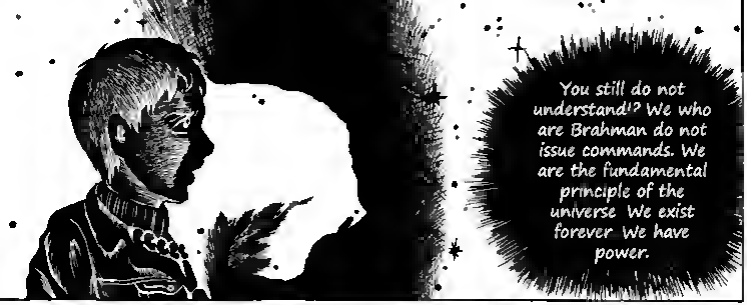

This was yet another marker that Sakyamuni became Atman and that the fate of the world had been determined. It established that Maitreya Buddha would...
When the Chinese monk Xuanzang traveled to Sakyamuni's home country in India, he reported that there was a stone statue of a horse that had been raised by King Ashoka

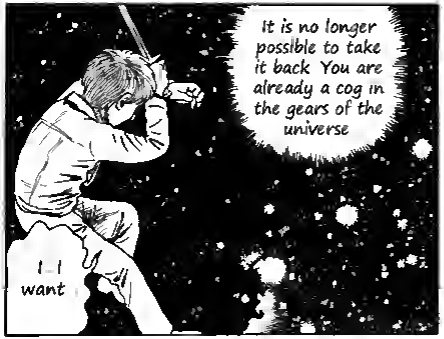
We might be able to find out more of Takeshi's fate...
To Mount Hiei I'd like to get there while Orion is in the sky...

Then you moved the dark nebula to this place far away so as to save the Earth. You promised you would meet with us again in a different time and place!

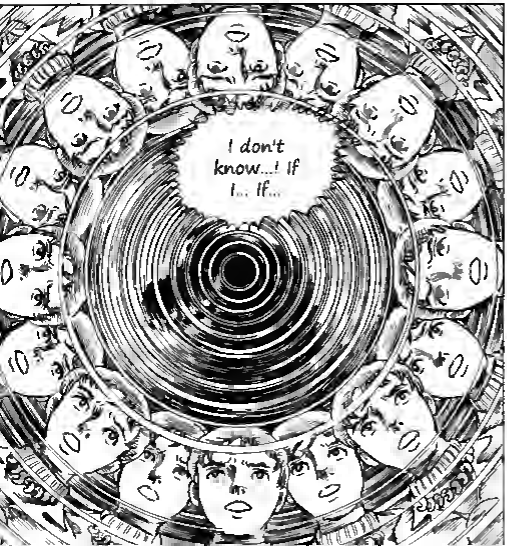
In the genealogy that stretches from Sakyamuni all the way to Maitreya, you, Yamatotakeru, appeared in Earth time sixteen hundred years ago.

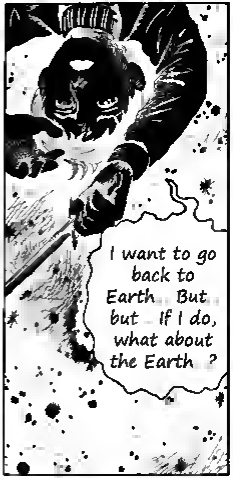
The time for decision has come!
Will you settle into ruling the puny star called Earth...
Where will you go with this dark nebula?
Your will alone shall decide!
If those do not suit you, you may proceed to even more greatness and an even more tremendous fate.
Space and time are open before you.
Or will you go somewhere far from Earth and view some of the secrets of the universe?
I only called out because Kikuchi Hiko was so awful. Brahman! Do not force me to do this!
I don't understand! Why is all that necessary? What should I do!?


You still do not understand!? We who are Brahman do not issue commands. We are the fundamental principle of the universe. We exist forever. We have power.


It is no longer possible to take it back. You are already a cog in the gears of the universe.
I... I want...

But the one who decides is you. You sought power and you received it!


I don't know...! If I... If...


I want to go back to Earth... But but... If I do, what about the Earth...?

Since long ago horses have been regarded as sacred throughout the world. In India there was Ashvamedha...

A ritual in which Chakravartin offered a horse as a sacrifice to the sky god...

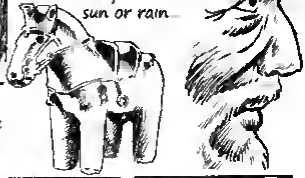
In Greece horses were sacrificed to Helios, the god of the sun.

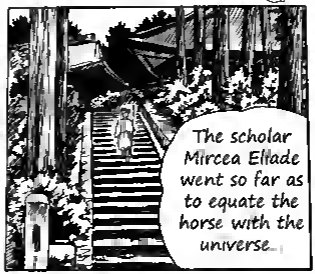
We got to Mount Hiei quicker that I thought we would... Oh that's right. We were discussing the worship of horses.

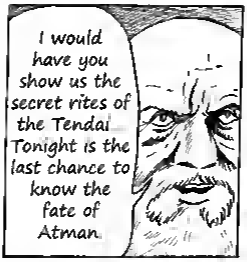
In some regions it is customary to sacrifice straw horses during the Star Festival of Tanabata

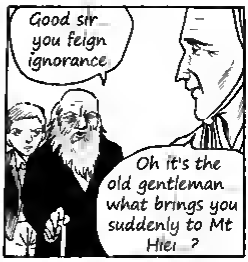
Later on, clay figures or wooden models came to be substituted for live horses

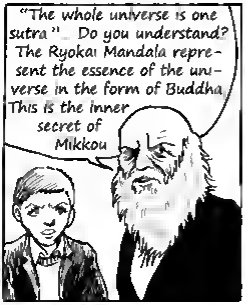
Even in Japan, horses have been consecrated since ancient times... especially in prayers during solar eclipses or for sun or rain...



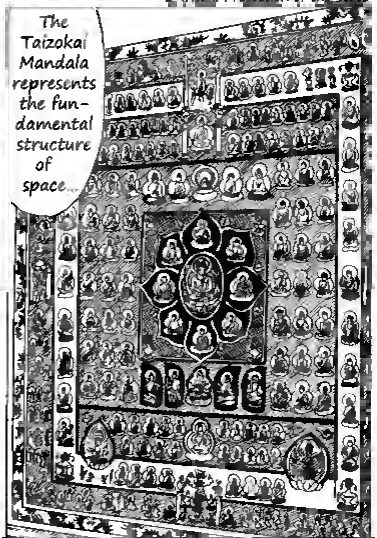




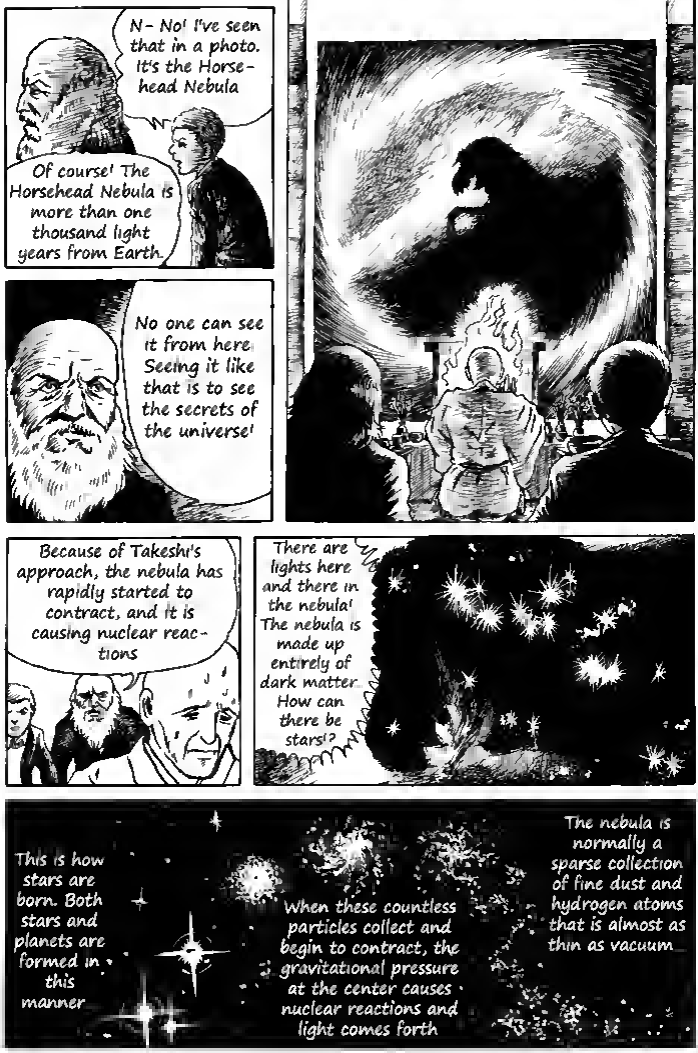



"The whole universe is one sutra" Do you understand? The Ryokai Mandala represent the essence of the universe in the form of Buddha This is the inner secret of Mikkou

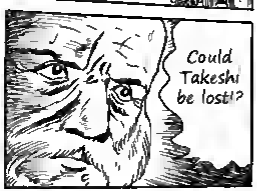
* S. ritual Protection of the State



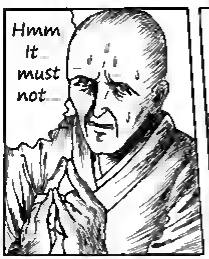
RAMA DA NAKU MAKU SA
MA SODA BODA NAAN
SAN MA KA SO KYA BA SARA
KO RO KO RO SEN DA SO
MA TOH GI SOH MAI
RUI YA AH SOHAH KAH
Light is coming from the center figure of Dainichi Nyorai on the Taizokai Mandala !?
Ah !?
burning
Ah!?


N- No! I've seen that in a photo. It's the Horse-head Nebula
Of course! The Horsehead Nebula is more than one thousand light years from Earth
No one can see it from here. Seeing it like that is to see the secrets of the universe!
Because of Takeshi's approach, the nebula has rapidly started to contract, and it is causing nuclear reac-tions
There are lights here and there in the nebula! The nebula is made up entirely of dark matter. How can there be stars!?
This is how stars are born. Both stars and planets are formed in this manner
When these countless particles collect and begin to contract, the gravitational pressure at the center causes nuclear reactions and light comes forth
The nebula is normally a sparse collection of fine dust and hydrogen atoms that is almost as thin as vacuum

So what happens now!?


Could Takeshi be lost!?

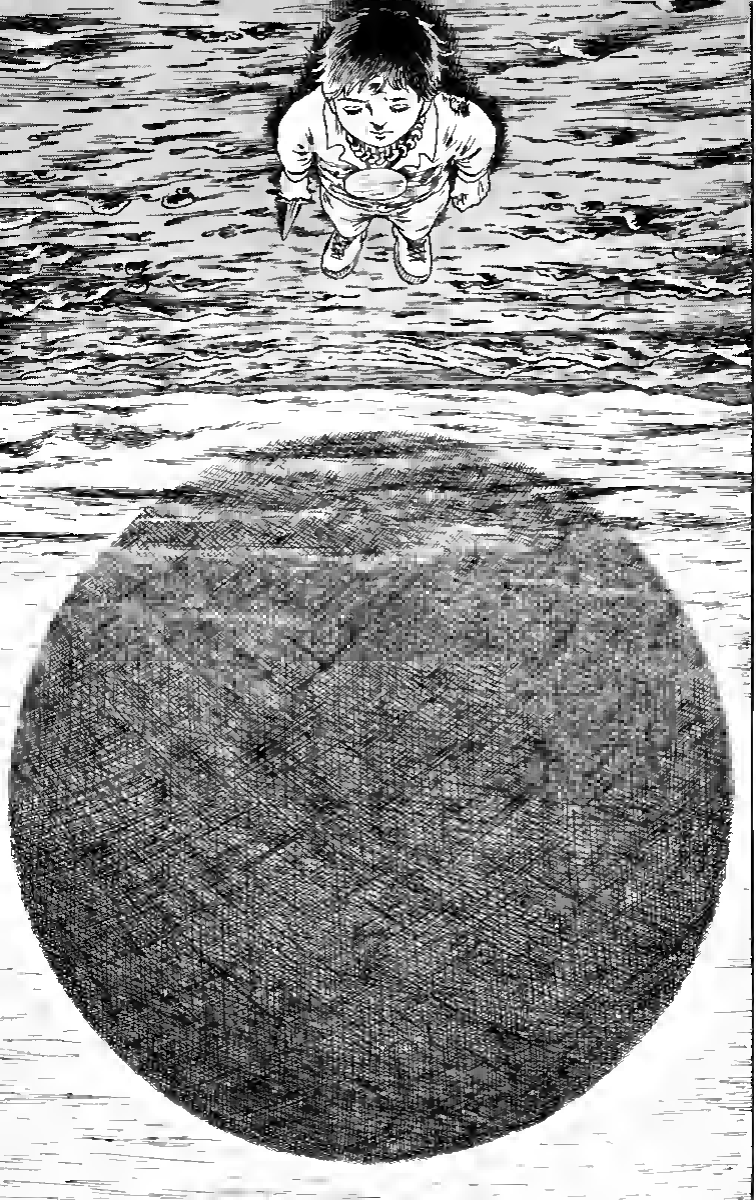
But in the case of this Horse-head Nebula that doesn't seem to be all there is to it It appears to be a gigantic living organism
It may live off the energy from nuclear reactions that it causes for itself
L- like Ame-no-Fuchiko-ma!


Hmm It must not...

No... I'm not sure Did he stop? No!

He may be coming straight for Earth! This is...

ズバッ
slash
Even I have never viewed so far as Orion before I suppose it was insolence
The Horse-head Nebula is heading for Earth, and we saw that it is moving rapidly
What might happen next?
At any rate, Orion is setting
The Mandala it's still shining
In one of the rent halves of the mandala, a lingering light remained
But as Orion set in in the western sky
It faded away

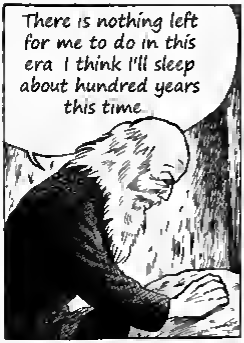


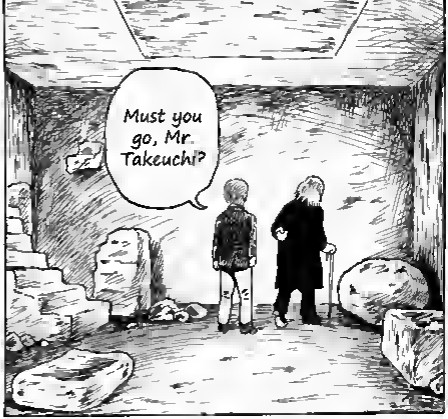
What have I done...
I wanted to go back to Earth but but...
Then...
A huge red sun... a ruined landscape... Could this be Earth...?
Huh?
I... Oh I just don't get it...
But I...
Now the earth... the people... could they have all been destroyed...?
stagger
ギクッ
shock
Heyyyy!
There's something moving over there!

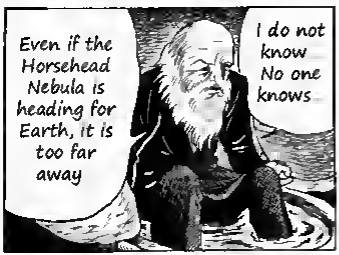
shriek shriek shriek
Ah
Ah
Ah !
So this is the Earth after all ?

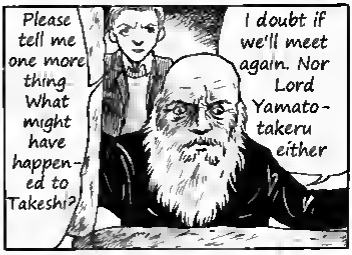
In the later stages it will expand into a red giant...
That's right I read in an astronomy textbook that the sun's lifespan is about ten billion years
Is this the Earth of the future
Even if the world is destroyed ?
I have returned to Earth exactly as I wished
It isn't possible Has it been five or six billion years ?
If so, how far in the future I wonder... The sun has gotten so big
There is something rising in the eastern sky

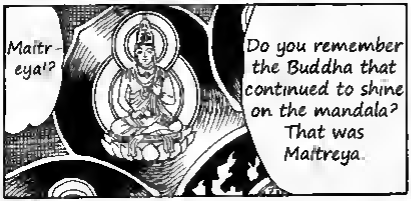
Once again,
Iwabune, Asuka—


There is nothing left for me to do in this era I think I'll sleep about hundred years this time


Must you go, Mr. Takeuchi?


Even if the Horsehead Nebula is heading for Earth, it is too far away
I do not know No one knows


Please tell me one more thing What might have happened to Takeshi?
I doubt if we'll meet again. Nor Lord Yamato-takeru either


Maitreya!?
Do you remember the Buddha that continued to shine on the mandala? That was Maitreya

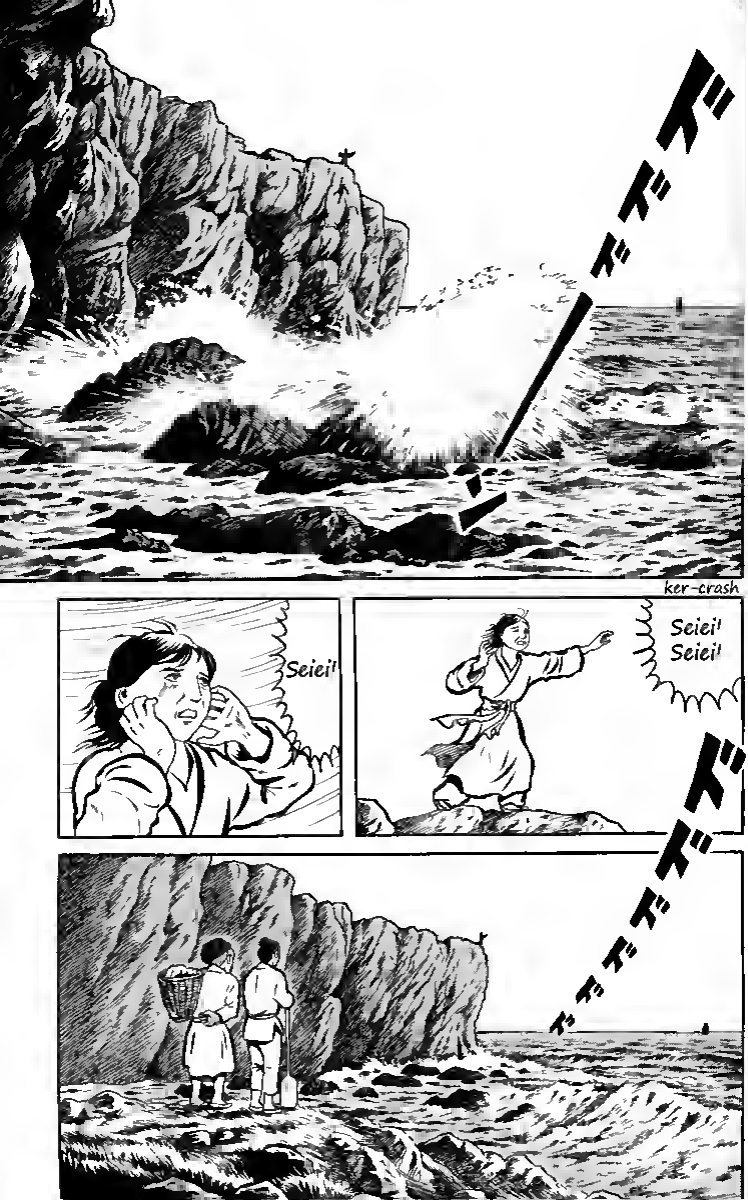
To arrive at Earth could take several hundreds or thousands of years perhaps even ten thousands of years or hundreds of millions of years
Hundreds of millions?

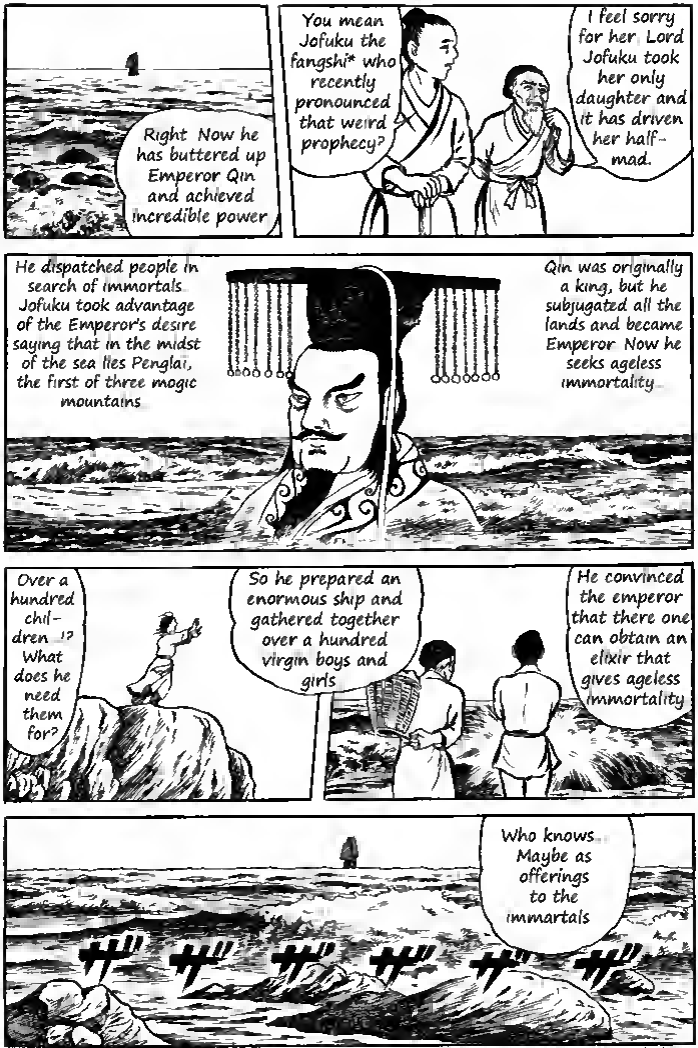
But where in the west? Perhaps to the Tushita heaven in the west where Maitreya is waiting
I'll tell you once more According to legends, after he died Yamatotakeru transformed into a white bird flew off into the western sky

I will watch the events of history only to the extent possible...
No one knows... I don't expect to make it that long myself
Maitreya... the Maitreya that will come after 5,670,000,000 years to save the world...
バクン…!
fwump
Old man Takeuchi... Ohka, Ogata
Now no one is left... Lord Kikuchi Hiko
Ahh... The sun is rising over Asuka
Takeshi...

Perhaps 5,670,000,000 years in the future Takeshi became the Bodhisattva Maitreya..

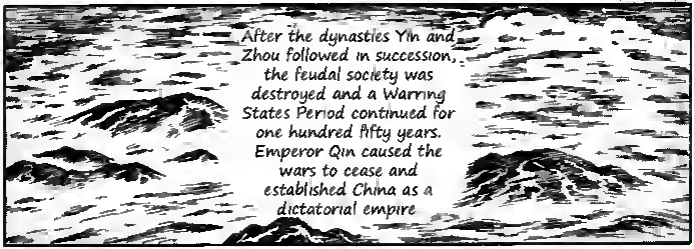
The Legend of Jofuku


ker-crash
Seiei!
Seiei!
Seiei!
crash


Right. Now he has buttered up Emperor Qin and achieved incredible power
You mean Jofuku the fangshi* who recently pronounced that weird prophecy?
I feel sorry for her. Lord Jofuku took her only daughter and it has driven her half-mad.
He dispatched people in search of immortals. Jofuku took advantage of the Emperor's desire saying that in the midst of the sea lies Penglai, the first of three magic mountains.
Qin was originally a king, but he subjugated all the lands and became Emperor. Now he seeks ageless immortality.
Over a hundred children!? What does he need them for?
So he prepared an enormous ship and gathered together over a hundred virgin boys and girls.
He convinced the emperor that there one can obtain an elixir that gives ageless immortality.
Who knows. Maybe as offerings to the immortals.
waves splashing

* Fangshi: a person with supernatural powers, skilled in magical arts.

ker crash


After the dynasties Yin and Zhou followed in succession, the feudal society was destroyed and a Warring States Period continued for one hundred fifty years. Emperor Qin caused the wars to cease and established China as a dictatorial empire

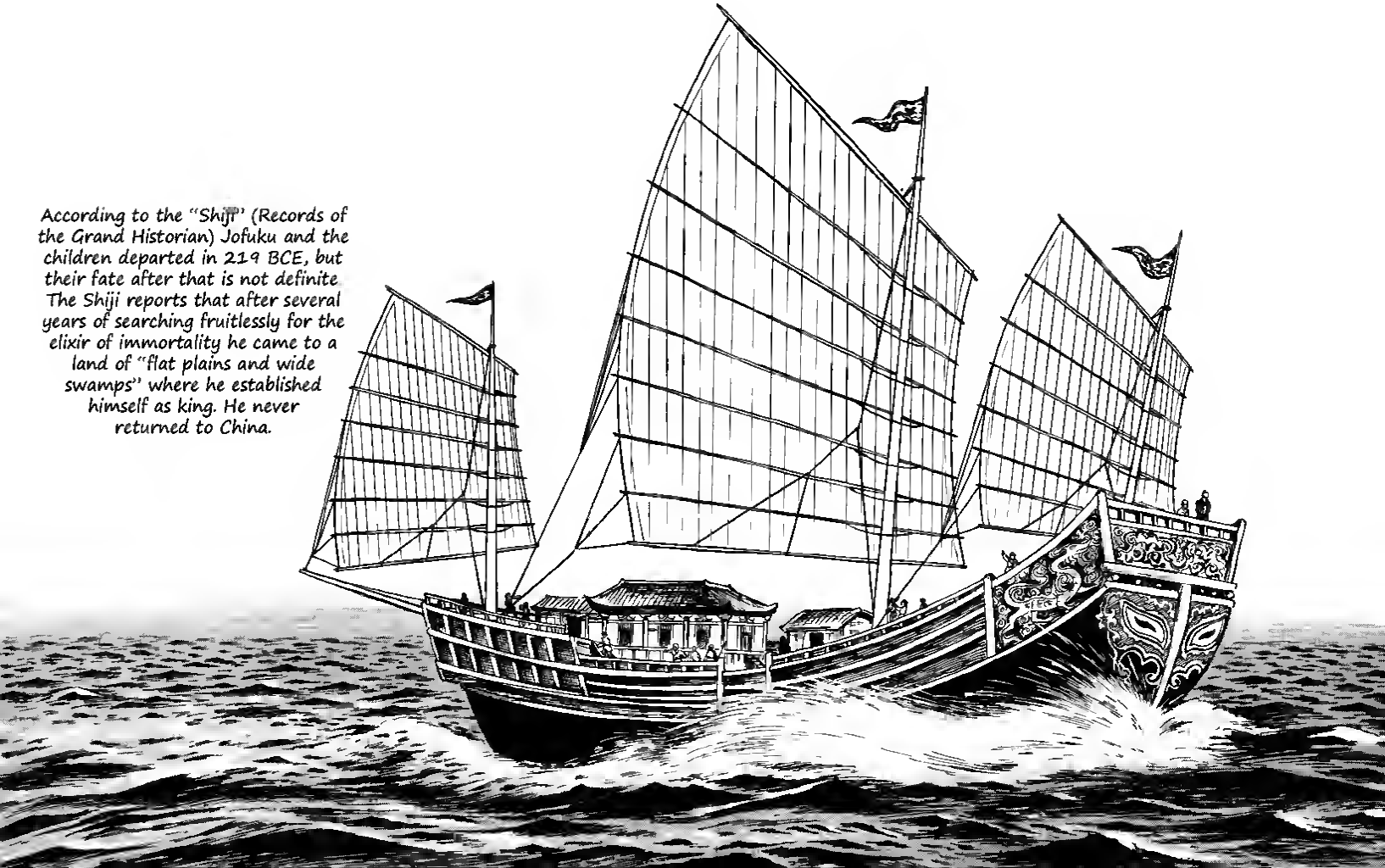
splashes

Thus he commanded Jofuku, from the state of Qi*, along with countless virgin boys and girls, to sail to Penglai in search of immortals.

splashes

* Qi: a state near present-day Shandong Province that faced the Bohai Sea and the Yellow Sea

The Legend of Jofuku



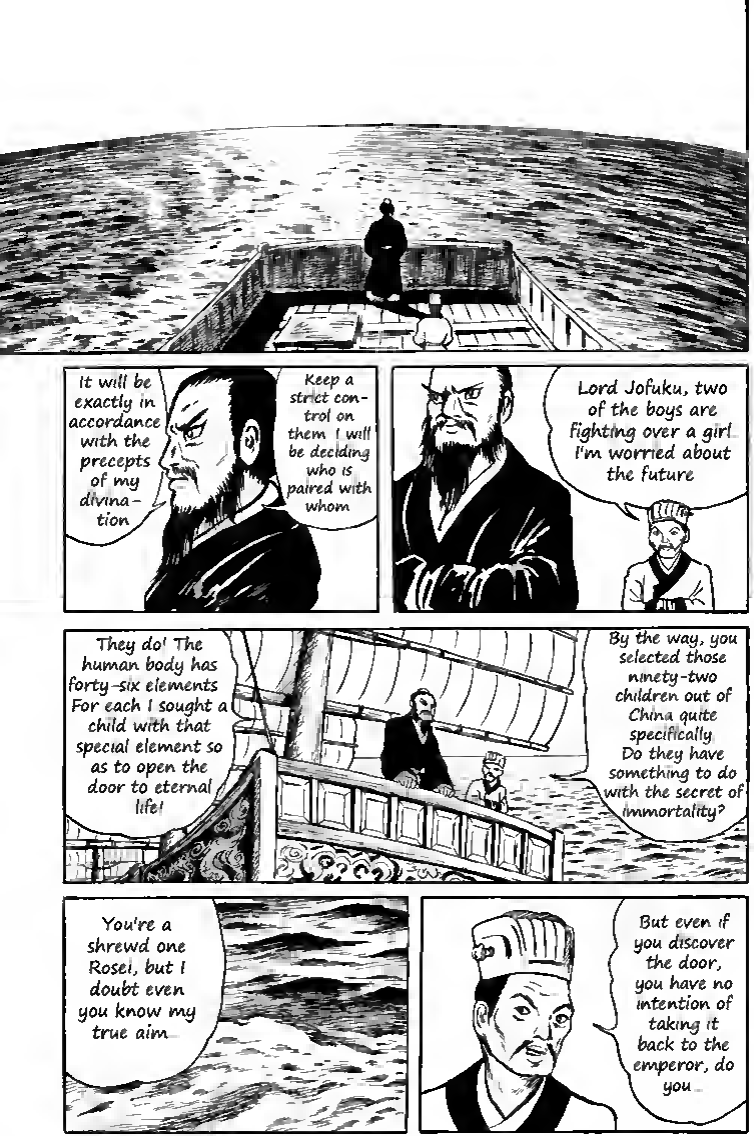
According to the "Shiji" (Records of the Grand Historian) Jofuku and the children departed in 219 BCE, but their fate after that is not definite. The Shiji reports that after several years of searching fruitlessly for the elixir of immortality he came to a land of "flat plains and wide swamps" where he established himself as king. He never returned to China.

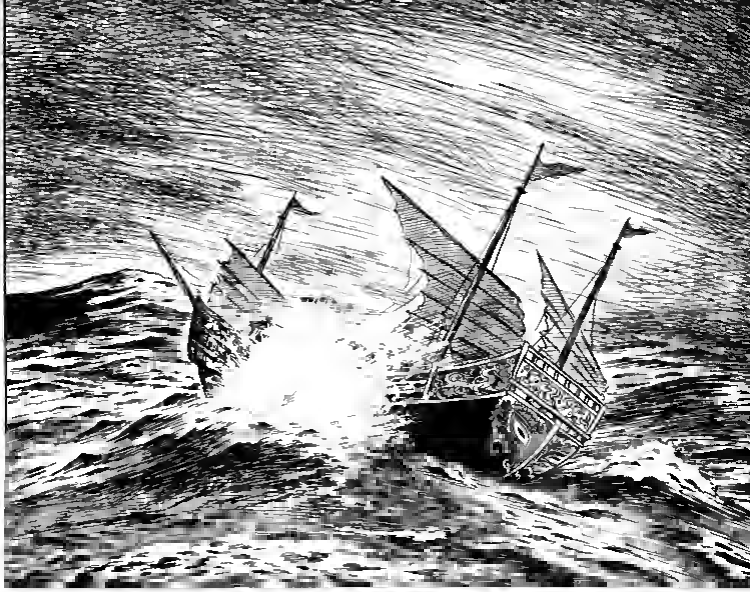
ギ ギ ギ ギ
creaking
ギ ギ ギ
creak creeaakk
Hey you No need to cry Everything's gonna be okay
Hey
sob sob

I'm Seiei I was forced into servitude by Lord Jofuku. My mother is now alone at home
My name is Gansei. My father was a scholar of Confucianism in Xianyang (the capital of Qin), but he was buried alive for disobeying the order of the emperor.
You don't want to talk to a guy like that. Come talk with me—
Say, you. Come over here. My name's Yohyo
What!?
Butt out, you!
Stop that! She doesn't like it!!
Ah!
バタン
Be silent! Lord Jofuku approaches!
thud

Everyone, listen carefully! This ship is bound for the island of Penglai, which lies in the middle of the sea far into the domains of the eastern barbarians*!
Jofuku!?
Forty-six boys and forty-six girls should produce forty-six children.
You will all presumably marry there and have children!
Also, unruly behavior will not be tolerated!
You shall henceforth be known as the Qin Clan.
slam
Huh!?
Hey! Just now Lord Jofuku said unruly behavior wouldn't be tolerated. Didn't you hear him!?
Ah... Ahh
Gansei... That man is really scary...

* The ancient Chinese referred to the eastern inhabitants of places like Japan and Korea as barbarians


It will be exactly in accordance with the precepts of my divination
Keep a strict control on them I will be deciding who is paired with whom
Lord Jofuku, two of the boys are fighting over a girl I'm worried about the future
They do! The human body has forty-six elements For each I sought a child with that special element so as to open the door to eternal life!
By the way, you selected those ninety-two children out of China quite specifically Do they have something to do with the secret of immortality?
You're a shrewd one Rosei, but I doubt even you know my true aim
But even if you discover the door, you have no intention of taking it back to the emperor, do you



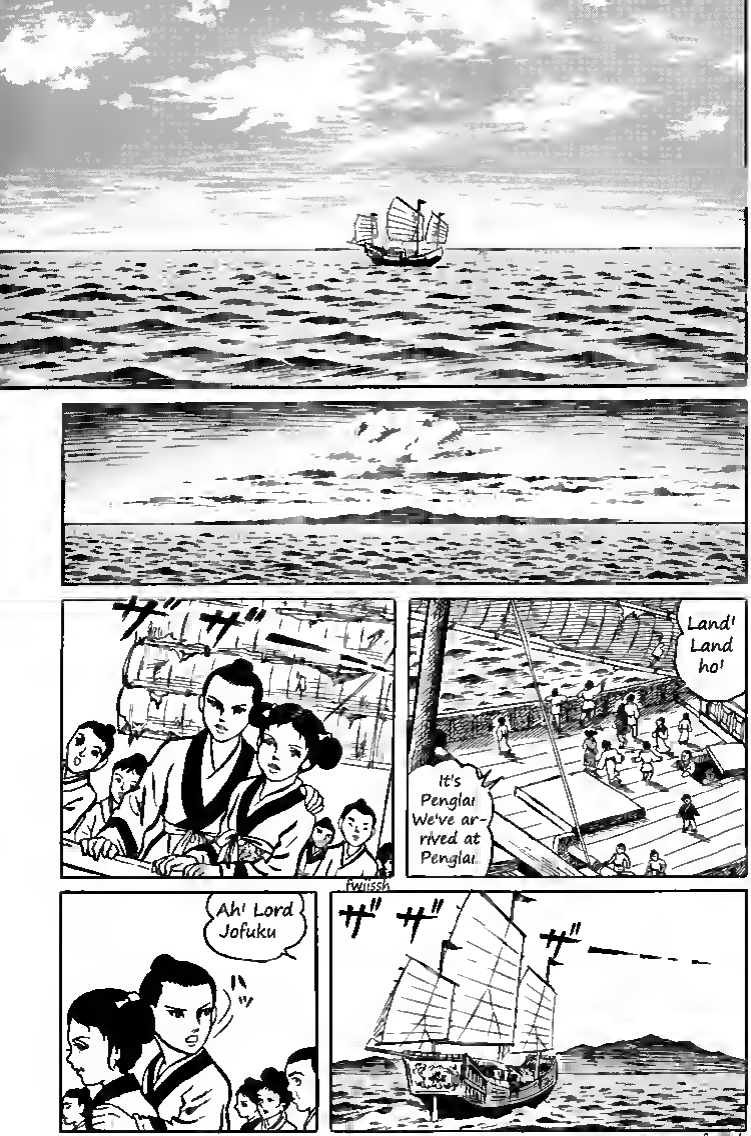
creak creak creak

crack

ker-crash

Ahh, Gansei
Hang on, Seiei!
Block the hole! The hole! You kids help too!
hide quickly
gasp
clunk
Over here The water won't come here
Lord Jofuku will decide who we marry based on his divination
Rumor? What rumor?
Have you heard the rumor?
creeaakk
You over there, what are you doing? Come help bail! The ship is sinking!
Sure. It looks like it could be useful
Me too listen will you keep quiet about the short sword?
If possible I would like you

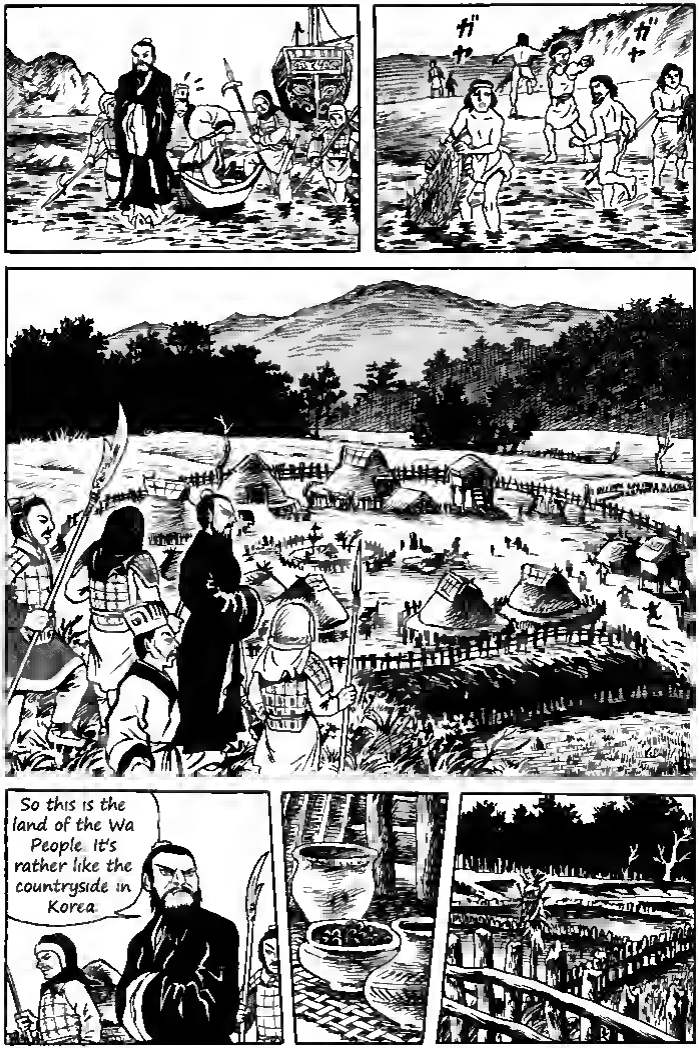
ker-crash
With this I can carry out the divination...
clatter
Nearly all the ritual vases from the Yin Dynasty are carved with vortices like these
ka-ka-creak
And I heard from a Korean fisherman that clay pots with the same pattern are to be found in Penglai
But those that can read them
all died in the Zhou Dynasty However there is an island country in the East where the barbarians still know the secret
creeaakk
boom boom boom


Land! Land ho!
It's Penglai! We've ar-rived at Penglai.
Fwiissh
Ah! Lord Jofuku
Fwiissh

What is it, Gansei?
Oh nothing
That damn Jofuku finally came out of his cabin
Ah, no Umm
What a mess, Rose! Have you been allowing this kind of willful behavior!?
What are you doing!? You two get away from each other!
Gansei
whack
At any rate, when we do get there I have finally decided who your marriage partners will be Please keep this well in mind!
Everyone listen up! We have arrived at the land of the Wa People. This is not our final destination!

Choto is with Jojo. Rishisei is with Busai. Koto is with Mukei. Kiso is with Tengai.
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
Gansei is with Enjaku!
Yohyo is with Seiei!
We will soon disembark. Prepare yourselves!
that is all! These pairings are in accordance with Lord Jofuku's divination, so they were decided by Heaven. I will tolerate no complaints!
Didya hear that Gansei? Too bad, huh!?
ドン
shove

wind blowing
Ah! People There are people here!
This is Penglai? Shouldn't there be lawns and gold and silver palaces?


ガヤ
ガヤ
So this is the land of the Wa People. It's rather like the countryside in Korea.

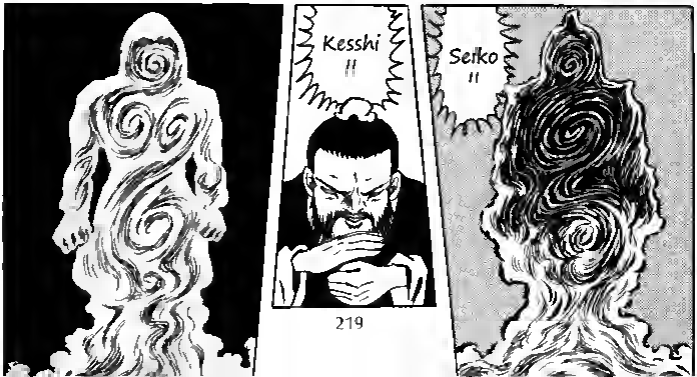
Old man, I learned of this land of the people of Wa from an ancient record and so I came here. I got this clay pot from a Korean fisherman.
As you can see, we live simply, planting rice fields and building houses in the open areas. We've forgotten the old ways.
This is... a rather old pot. We do not make things like this any more.
He said there were many pots like this here. Is it true?
But up in the mountains there are savage peoples who still use the old pots and worship clay idols...

Kyaaaa
L- Lord Jofuku
Kyehh Kyaa
Kyaehhh Kyauahh

Jofuku doesn't have many with him. Even if he survives, on this mountain trail I can

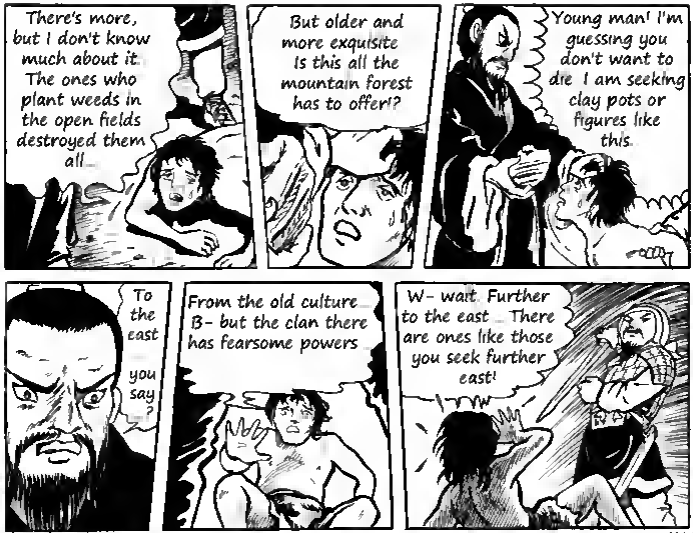
ボワァン
fwoosh

プチ
bite


Kesshi
!!
Seiko
!!

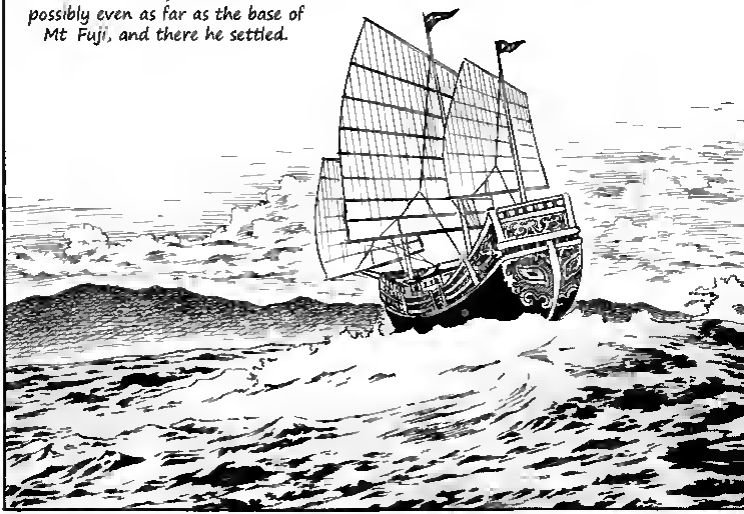
Seiko! Kesshi!
Kill them!
Leave no
survivors!

ドドドド
N- no good. Those guys are monsters...
These are not what I'm looking for! This is just primitive trash... shit!
ガシャ


There's more, but I don't know much about it. The ones who plant weeds in the open fields destroyed them all...
But older and more exquisite Is this all the mountain forest has to offer!?
Young man! I'm guessing you don't want to die. I am seeking clay pots or figures like this.
To the east you say?
From the old culture... B- but the clan there has fearsome powers
W- wait. Further to the east... There are ones like those you seek further east!
bang bang bang
seagull cries

And I heard he bought a lot of food from the Wa people too
Lord Jofuku is repairing the ship. I wonder how far he's going
Say, Gansei. Let's escape
They've been keeping close guard... I finally managed to sneak away
Seiei!
Let's run away somewhere, just the two of us
There are rice and vegetable fields here, and the natives are kind
I hate Yohyo. He's violent...
Eh!?
But now I can't. There is something I must do first, so I must stay near the ship...
I want to Seiei, but...

According to legend, after setting sail from China Jofuku arrived at northern Kyushu. From there he drifted further, to Kumaso or possibly even as far as the base of Mt. Fuji, and there he settled.

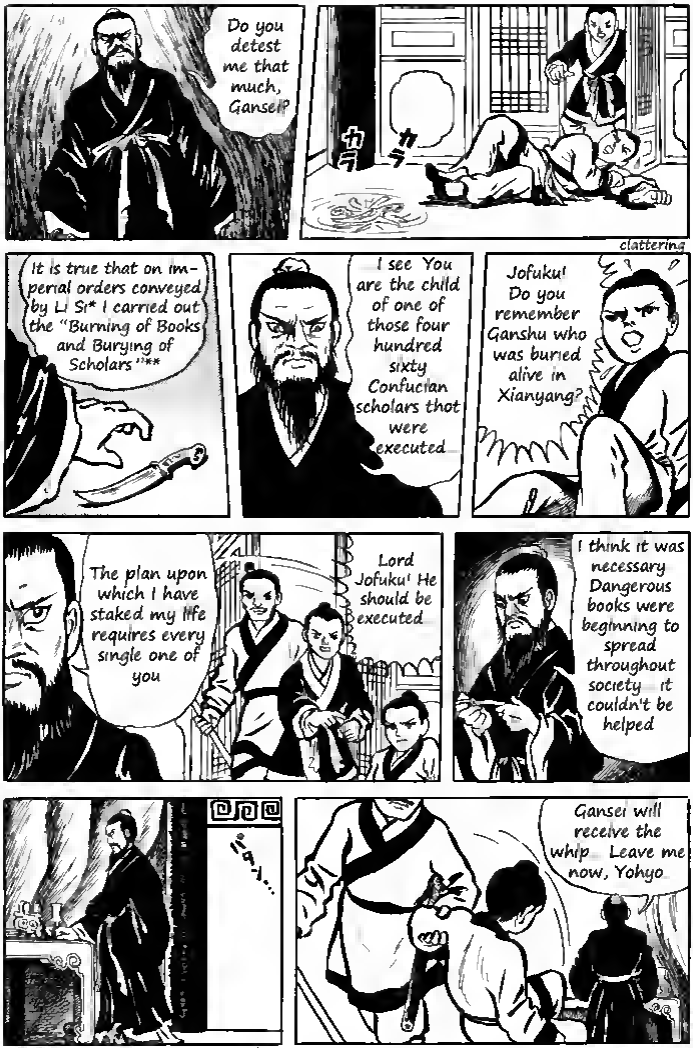


Jofuku was leaving the Yayoi area of northern Kyushu and venturing into the East Sea, where from the Kinki area eastwards the Jomon culture still flourished

At this period, the Yayoi Culture was finally beginning to take hold in Japan. But that was coming in sequence from the west, gradually displacing the older Jomon culture. The further east one went, the stronger the Jomon traditions were

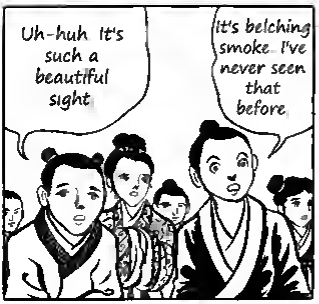
Hey, outta my way!
Gansei, stop... Yohyo!
Fight Fight
WA!
Damn you
Wa!
Bastard
I am following your orders, sir. It's Gansei who keeps bothering my Selei...
The two of you are a problem. You don't understand my larger... goal...
This is my chance. There aren't any soldiers. The only one here is Yohyo...
Ageless immortality is not something one can get by drinking a potion or studying books.
Gansei, do you think I just selected your partner at random? Or do you think I am sacrificing you to the emperor's desire for immortality?
At any rate, by the time thot day comes you will be thanking me. That's all. You may leave.

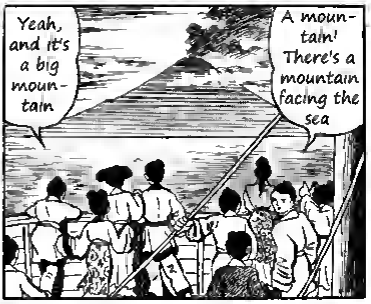
Lord Jofuku, look out!


Do you detest me that much, Gansei?
カラ
カラ
clattering
It is true that on imperial orders conveyed by Li Si* I carried out the "Burning of Books and Burying of Scholars"**
I see You are the child of one of those four hundred sixty Confucian scholars thot were executed
Jofuku! Do you remember Ganshu who was buried alive in Xianyang?
The plan upon which I have staked my life requires every single one of you
Lord Jofuku! He should be executed
I think it was necessary Dangerous books were beginning to spread throughout society it couldn't be helped
ピカ…
Gansei will receive the whip Leave me now, Yohyo
slam

* chancellor of Qin

** "Burning of Books and Burying of Scholars" An event in which the new emperor ordered Confucianist books burned and Confucian scholars executed by being buried alive.

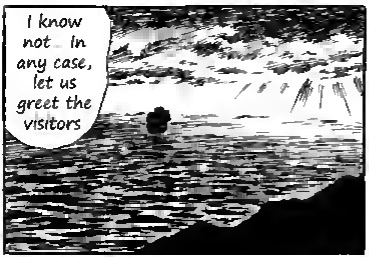

Uh-huh. It's such a beautiful sight.
It's belching smoke. I've never seen that before.


Yeah, and it's a big mountain.
A mountain! There's a mountain facing the sea.

That must be the mountain of Penglai. The mountain of the immortals.

Gansei, please don't disobey Lord Jofuku. He is a terrifying person.
We're just his tools. Shit. That's right. He said every single one of us is necessary...

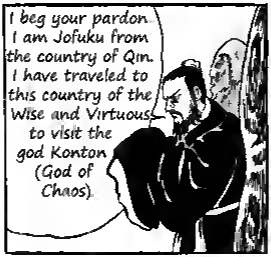
A ship approaches. It is from a much, much larger foreign land than that of the iwakusu-bune and morota-bune (forms of dug-out canoes).

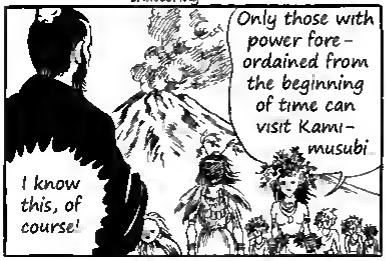

I know not. In any case, let us greet the visitors.

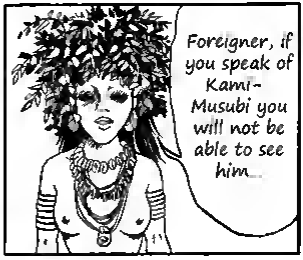
Could that be the reason Mt. Fuji has become so active?

fwoosh

chattering

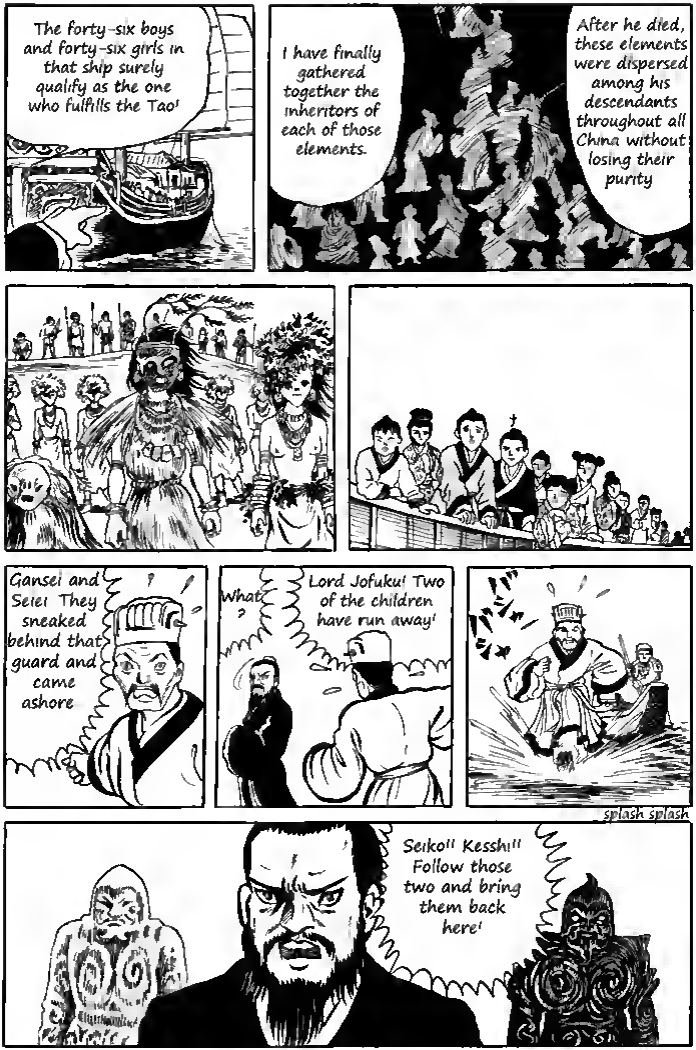

I beg your pardon. I am Jofuku from the country of Qin. I have traveled to this country of the Wise and Virtuous to visit the god Konton (God of Chaos).

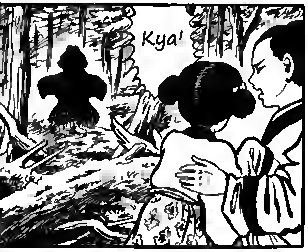


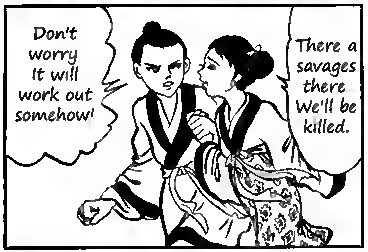


He was formed from the forty-six elements of Tao that are the fundamentals of the universe
Of old in China was one such as that. According to Tao*, he was given power and fated to rule the world.

* Tao the Universal Principle


The forty-six boys and forty-six girls in that ship surely qualify as the one who fulfills the Tao!
I have finally gathered together the inheritors of each of those elements.
After he died, these elements were dispersed among his descendants throughout all China without losing their purity
Gansei and Seiei They sneaked behind that guard and came ashore
What?
Lord Jofuku! Two of the children have run away!
splash splash
Seiko!! Kesshi!! Follow those two and bring them back here!


Kya!

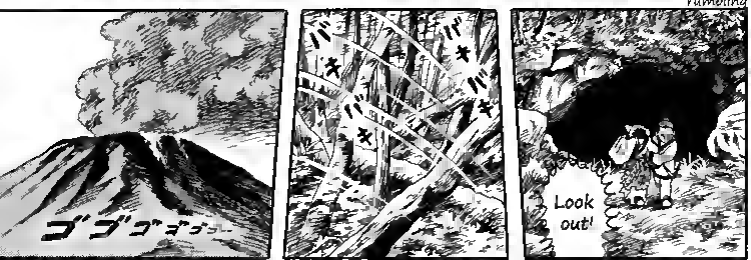

Don't worry It will work out somehow!
There a savages there We'll be killed.

Seiei, just a little farther. If we can make it into the forest

Don't be afraid. It's just a clay figure...
Ganse! ... isn't this a sacred place of the Wa People? Aren't the figures a warning not to enter?
It just keeps going back Even Jofuku's troops won't find us here...
Let's rest here for a minute

clattering rumble rumble

rumbling



rumbling snap crack whack

Seiei
Look

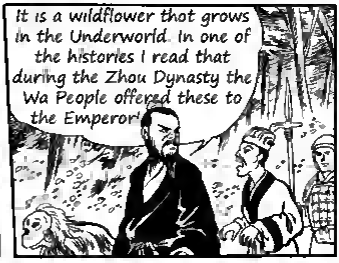
Flowers

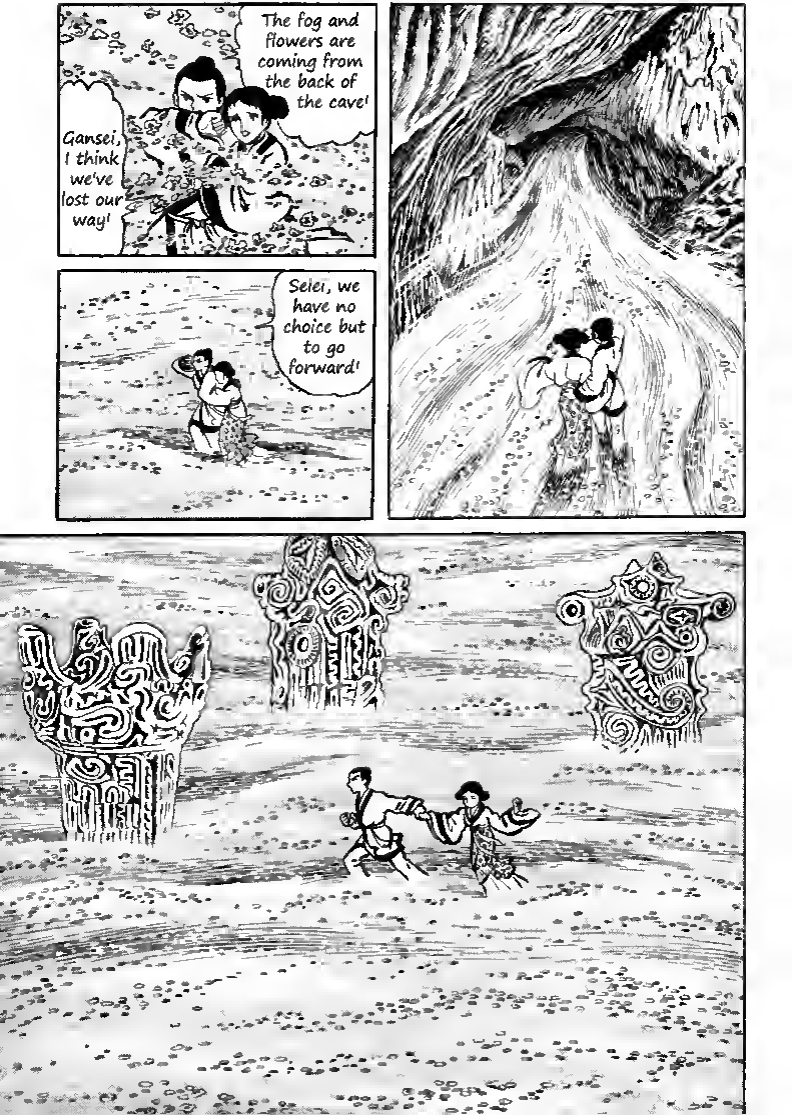
Hmm. They're weird white flowers coming from the air and covering all the forest

Seiei, don't touch them. They are not of this world!
But they're pretty. I wish I could stay forever hidden with you in these flowers...
Kyaa!
stand

I have never seen them either. It is a flower unbound by time. In a hundred years it may bloom only once. But only at those times can one see Kami-musubi.

This is choso!
Huh!?

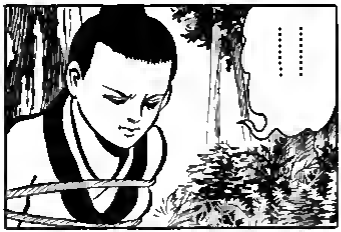

It is a wildflower that grows in the Underworld. In one of the histories I read that during the Zhou Dynasty the Wa People offered these to the Emperor.


The fog and flowers are coming from the back of the cave!
Gansei, I think we've lost our way!
Seiei, we have no choice but to go forward!

Gansei, what should we do? Where are we going!?
I do not know Seiei!
Seiei!

Seiei, what is it!
フラ…
stagger
ピシッ
shatter

It doesn't seem that words work on you. So you thought to get revenge by running away and spoiling my plan? Fool.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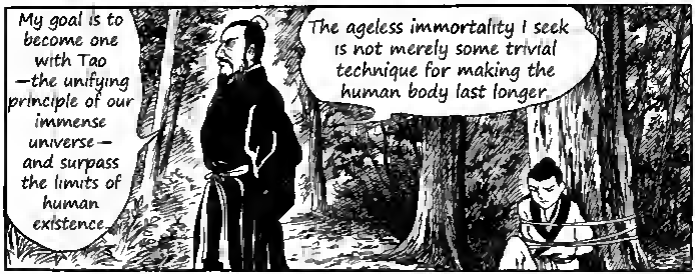
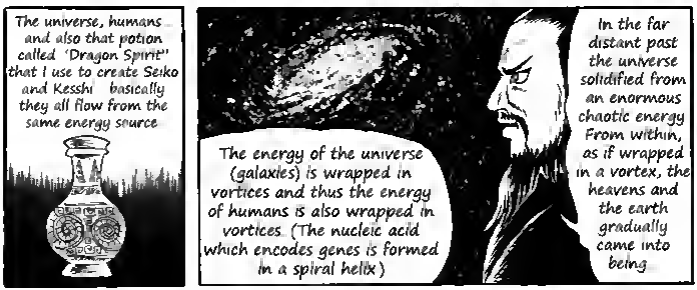
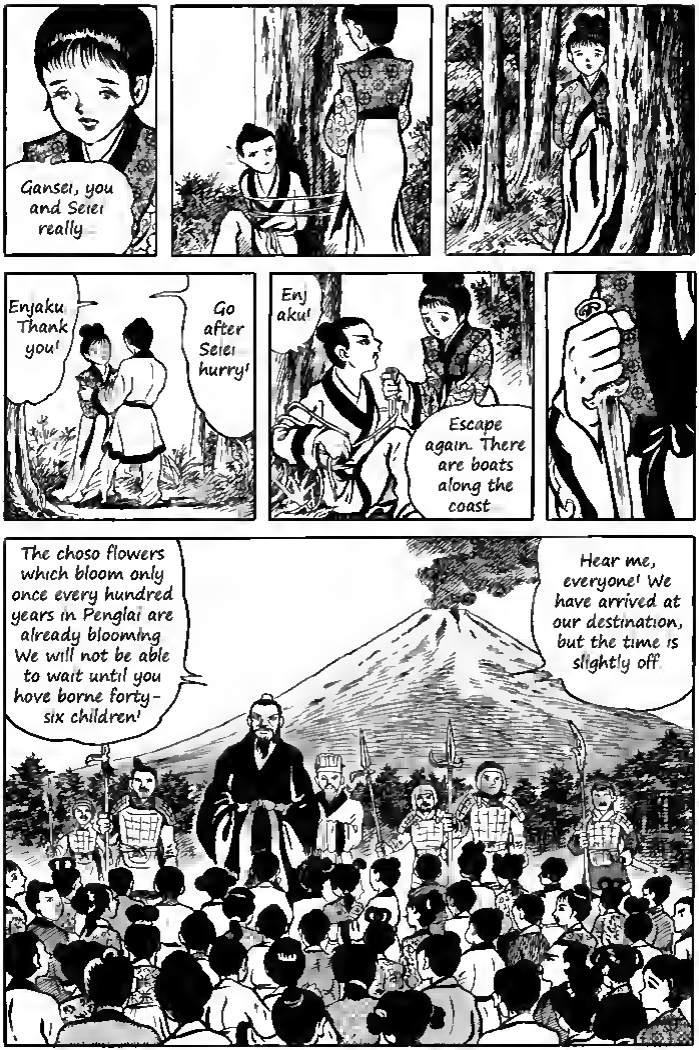

My goal is to become one with Tao —the unifying principle of our immense universe— and surpass the limits of human existence.
The ageless immortality I seek is not merely some trivial technique for making the human body last longer.


The universe, humans and also that potion called 'Dragon Spirit' that I use to create Seiko and Kesshi basically they all flow from the same energy source.
The energy of the universe (galaxies) is wrapped in vortices and thus the energy of humans is also wrapped in vortices. (The nucleic acid which encodes genes is formed in a spiral helix)
In the far distant past the universe solidified from an enormous chaotic energy. From within, as if wrapped in a vortex, the heavens and the earth gradually came into being.

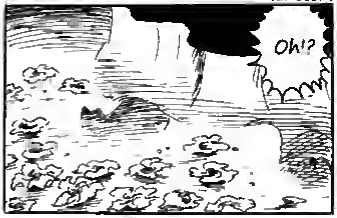
What, you? Don't be silly Unless the forty-six separate elements embodied in each of you are combined even if you touch it you will die!
...I have touched it!
Just a tiny sliver of this life energy can easily give life to billions of humans. If we could but touch this greatness, you too could...
I understood when I touched it The universe is already complete and perfect in itself
It is true I have been a fool, but you are also a fool
Those substitute haly men are fakes!
It is the forty-six children you will bear that will stand in for the holy man that Tao seeks
The son of a Confucianist would lecture me on Taoism...! Anyhow, you will see that I am right!
By interfering with it, you are just a nuisance. You and I stand together as imbeciles. In the end, what we humans do is...
If possible, next time truly together
The one natural most true most suited to Tao is you
Seiei, forgive me ! have used you


Gansei, you and Seiei really...
Enjaku! Thank you!
Go after Seiei hurry!
Enjaku!
Escape again. There are boats along the coast
The choso flowers which bloom only once every hundred years in Penglai are already blooming. We will not be able to wait until you have borne forty-six children!
Hear me, everyone! We have arrived at our destination, but the time is slightly off.

Soon it will be time to meet Konton. Bring Gansei here!

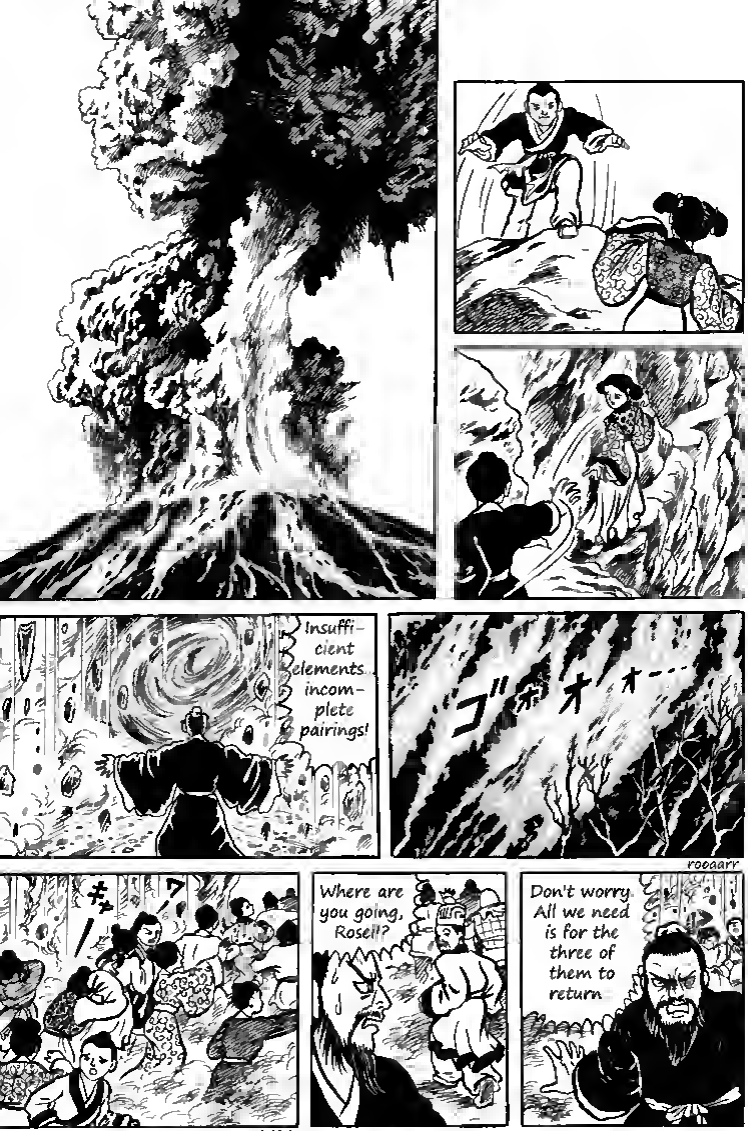
Idiot! He will not leave by himself!
Lord Jofuku! Gansei has escaped!
What !?
You aren't Seiei... You are Enjaku Damn you!
Seiei Hey!
No She's still some-where here...
Seiei is with him Shit!
ゴゴゴゴゴゴ
rumbling

ka-boom

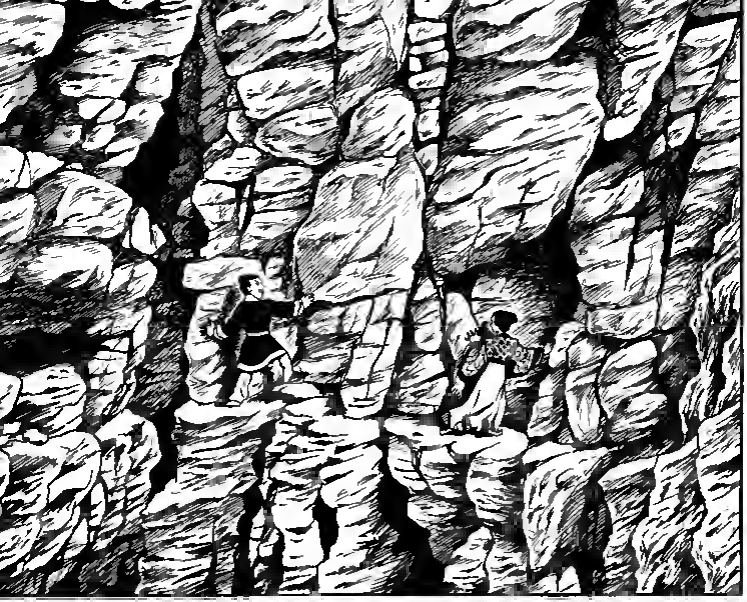


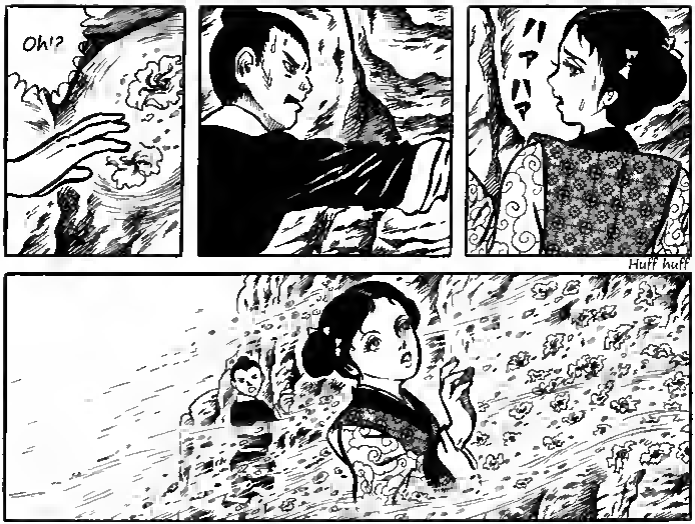
Kyaaa!

ドドド

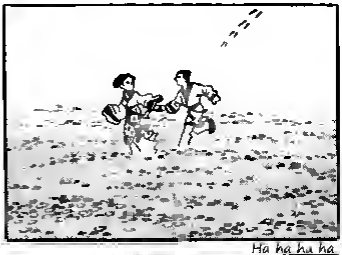

Insuffi-
cient
elements.
incom-
plete
pairings!
ゴオオォォ---
roeaarr
KYAAA
WAA
Where are you going, Rosell?
Don't worry. All we need is for the three of them to return.

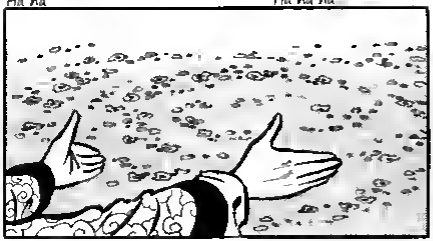
Waaaa!
splatter
floating
Seiei!
stab

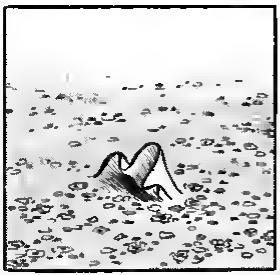



Oh!?
ハァハァ
Huff huff

Ha ha
Ha ha ha


Ha ha ha ha

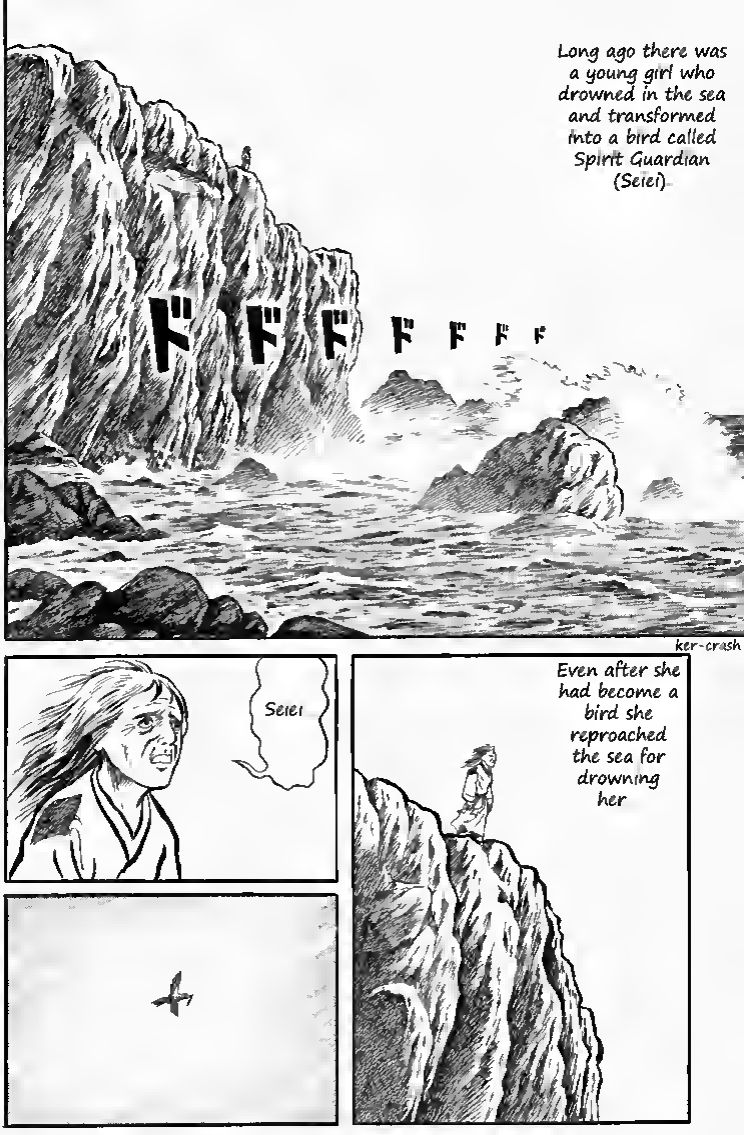


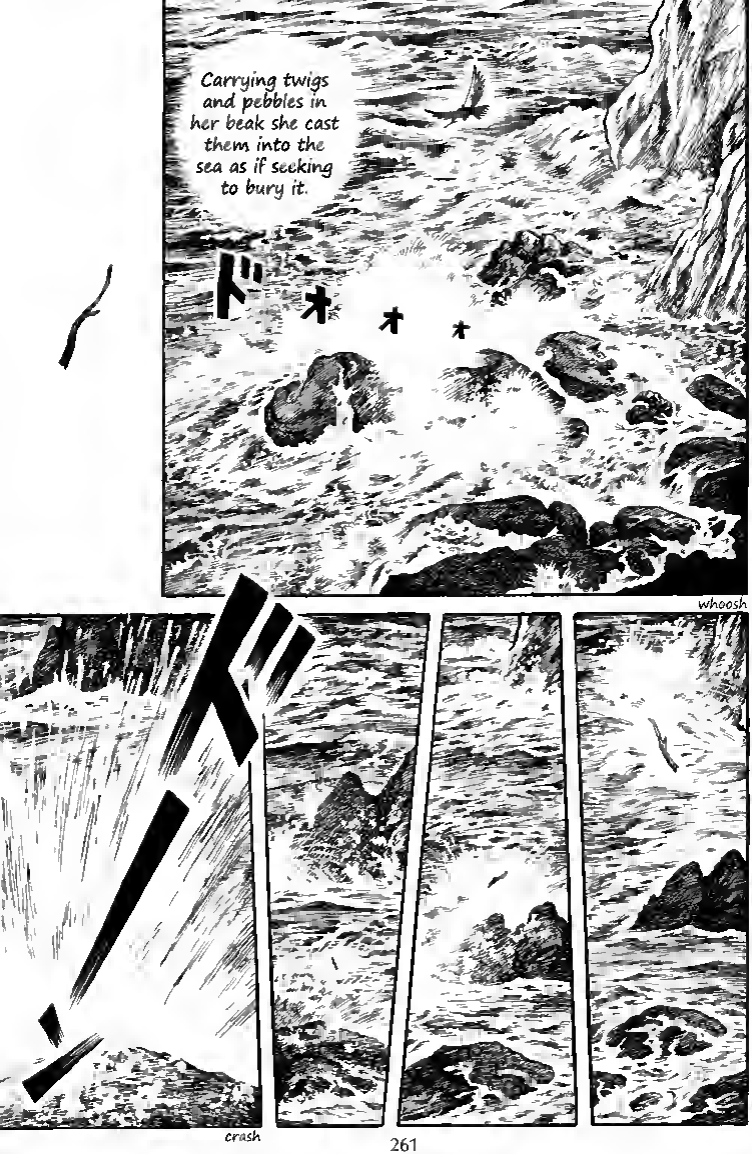


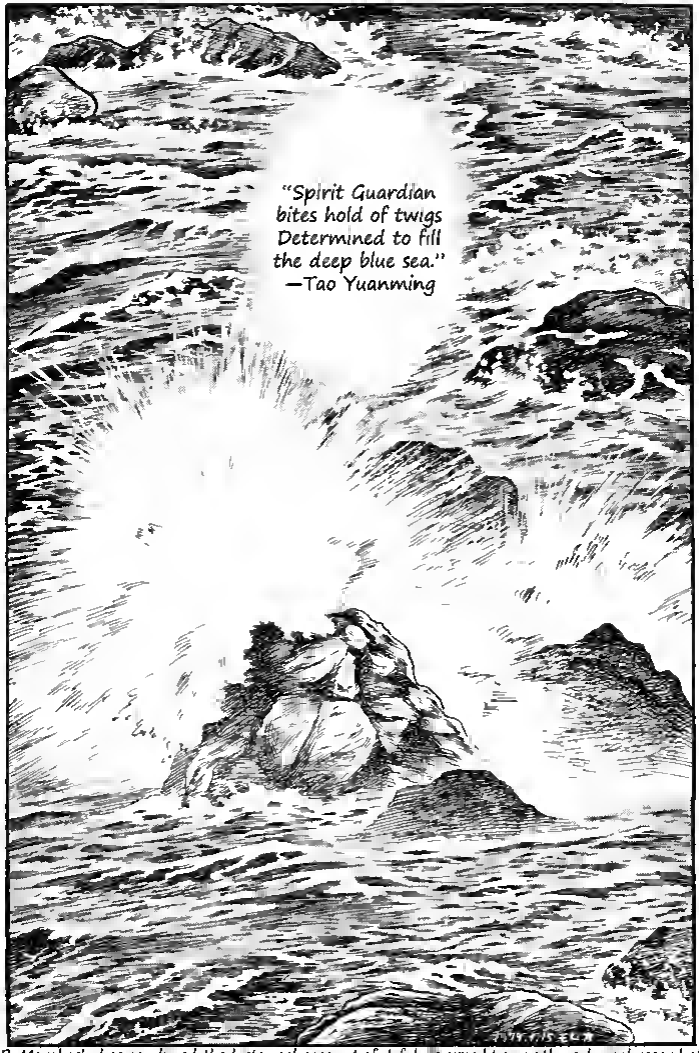
Ah!
ガラッ
sliding
ズド
ka-thud
Seiei!
ザザ
sizzling

Konton! Will you open them for me? Will you open the gates of eternity!?
Seiei! Seiei!
Seiei!

ドドド


Long ago there was a young girl who drowned in the sea and transformed into a bird called Spirit Guardian (Seiei)
ドドドドドドドド
ker-crash
Seiei
Even after she had become a bird she reproached the sea for drowning her


Carrying twigs and pebbles in her beak she cast them into the sea as if seeking to bury it.
ドオ
whoosh
ドドド



(N B Morohoshi has combined the historical account of Jofuku's expedition with geological record of the Gotemba eruption of Mt Fuji that filled Suruga bay with mud Both occurred around 2300 years ago The final pages reference a Chinese legend about a bird who foolishly attempts to fill the sea with twigs and pebbles, but I think in this case we are to infer that Seiei made a real good job of it)

▶初出一覧◀

「暗黒神話」
週刊少年ジャンプ20号～25号（1976年）

「徐福伝説」
月刊少年ジャンプ増刊1月号（1979年）

▶参考文献◀

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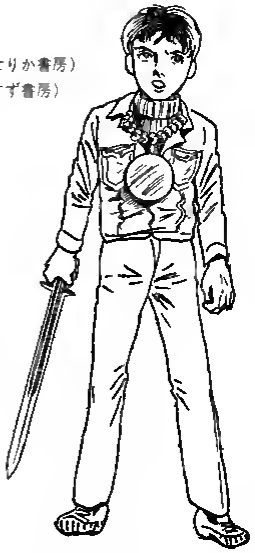

あとがき

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JUMP SUPER ACE

暗黒神話

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不安の立像
夢みる機械
天崩れ落つる日

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